





# Cook's Chronicles

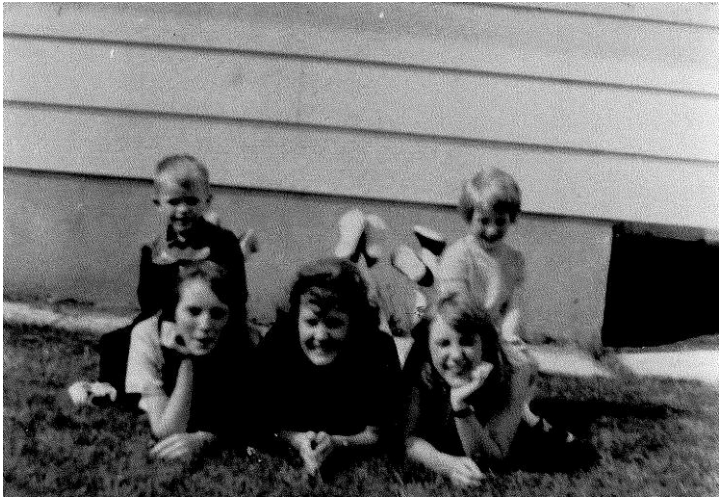
Lela Jacqueline Cook

Cover photos by Ronalie Roberge and Paula Jeffrey

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*Dedicated to my children and grandchildren, whom this  
book is all about.*



Circa 1967



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This has been a collaborative project that Jackie's descendents had a hand in. Thank you Ronalie for typing out the original calligraphic text, thank you Libby for editing, and thank you to Valerie, Ginny, Ronalie, Nancy and Norris for your careful review, feedback and additions. Most of all, thank you Mom for painstakingly documenting all these years, and sharing family memories that will last lifetimes.



## LELA JACQUELINE COOK

"Jackie" was born Lela Jacqueline Silverthorn on March 8th, 1929 in Swan River, Manitoba, to Jack & Alline (Helps) Silverthorn of Bowsman, Manitoba. The third of four children, she called Bowsman home for most of her formative and married years, with a stint of teen years spent in St. James, Winnipeg, where Jack was employed with the military. Jackie graduated in Bowsman, Manitoba and married Arthur Roy "Pat" Cook, on June 28th, 1950.

Jackie was quite adept at the written word. Whether it was witnessed in her letters to family, her 60 years of recording in her diary, her coming to the aid of the kids in their essays and reports, or in her later years' *'Cook's Chronicles'*, she had a flourish with words, be it in her reporting, her witty repertoire, or just her view of the events of the day. Her writing reflects the person we knew, making this compilation a genuine gift from the woman we loved dearly to be with.

The author is remembered by the children of whom she wrote:

*Valerie - When I was young I accidentally came across one of Mom's letters and discovered the joy of reading her works...that is how I found out there was going to be 2 new babies in our family! From then on I knew it was worth reading anything I saw lying about! My passion for food preparation came from Mom allowing me to cook meals whenever I wanted and try any recipe I wanted. Due to the fact she was not afraid to try anything I never learned that you could not have success the first time!*

*Virginia - Mom would draft an opening paragraph for me just to kick start me when I had an essay to do. When my children procrastinated, I employed the same trick. Her use*

*of 'big' words has always inspired me to use more of the many different words, that we have the option of using, in my speech, as well as my writing. Her willingness to edit my work, and then edit it again, taught me well to strive for the best final product. I could go on...and on.*

*Ronalie - I remember recounting book after book to Mom, done in loving detail and with great excitement! (On and on I'd go, with no thought to how confusing I was making it, oy). She was so patient. She gave me love of reading and writing.*

*Nancy - As an adult Mom, friend, sister, in-law, I believe Mom has exemplified in me, the gifts of laughter and welcome to family, friends and acquaintances..*

*Norris - My fondest memories of Mom was staying up late with only her, waiting for "visitors". She always took such an interest in each of her children, but that was my focused time. During these periods we played cards and chatted. Chatting often got heavy as she would inquire about those events going on in my life and would often "dig a little". I now look back, knowing how "for granted" I took those opportunities, and recognize the gift that I had been given.*

*Never without purpose, we stayed up waiting for our visitors, friends or family, praying for a safe journey, and sleeping only when their journey was complete. Mom exemplified this level of kindness, selflessness and caring in all that she did ... after all ... she was Our Mom!*

On January 1st, 2002, after a number of years of compromised health, Jackie passed away from pneumonia. She was 72 years of age. This book helps us to remember and celebrate the 'life' she brought to our existence. God blessed us.



Circa 1987

Lela Jacqueline Cook

## 1 INTRODUCTION

*Now that my family have all left home (I hesitate to use the word "grown up!") I can now tell it like it was.*

In lighter moments (and noisier) I query "who's left home?", but we must have done something right as they return so frequently and we would have it no other way. The empty nest causes various reactions. There is pride that to date no one has disgraced us. They seem to be respectable well-adjusted adults. There is a certain amount and lack of purpose to life after thirty years of caring for more than ourselves but at the same time I keep filling jars and freezers like we are still a family of seven – hopefully I will get over that. Since I have many interests and am basically lazy I expect to enjoy the easier life – am gradually getting on top of it, a condition never before known in thirty two years of marriage. Chaos has never unduly bothered me – fortunately – as the following pages will attest.

Valerie: October 1st 1951

Farmers should ideally plan their children to arrive in January, February or March. October was not a bad month for me as long as I didn't care whether I saw Pat or not. The day Valerie was born was the first good day in

weeks and Pat swung into harvest, three quarters to take off with what he called 'the apple box' – a six foot John Deere combine. He had Harold Tall and Donalda Laidlaw for help and they had a lot of fun along with the hard work and long hours. The day Valerie was born Mom was baking bread and in order to get an early glimpse of her first grandchild, she packed the bread in the car and took it to Swan and had Aunt Florence bake it.

A highlight of my hospital stay was a visit from several of my fellow telephone operators of two years earlier with a blanket as a gift for Valerie. I hated the hospital and was anxious to be out. Since all the men were harvesting, Valerie and I were transported to Mom's by Dora Cook. On October 11th, with all the men harvesting, I called a taxi and came home. No red carpet. I never saw the men until 11 p.m. Next morning awoke to snow and incomplete harvest remained on the fields until spring.

The highlight of the day we came home was Janie's reaction. She had just begun teaching and Dad and Dale had gone to Virden to bring her out for Thanksgiving weekend, with orders not to tell that Val had arrived. It was late when they returned so I went to bed. Janie came upstairs and seeing me, said "What are you doing here?" I replied that I had come to welcome her and when it got so late I went to bed. She didn't notice I was no longer pregnant and right on cue, down the hall Valerie went "wa." Janie snatched up the coal oil lamp and went careening down the hall, lamp teetering, oblivious to the fact that it was in danger of starting the house on fire.

Virginia: November 4, 1952

The washing machine was broken down and I was washing by hand. I was hanging out sheets when Elmer and Eva, visiting from Eston, drove by to visit Mae and Carl. When I awoke at 4:30 the next morning in labour



Elmer said, "I knew you would go to the hospital when I saw you doing those sheets." Pains were light and I refused to go to the hospital, but Pat and Elmer were threatening to get out block and tackle. We finally bundled up Valerie and went to Mom's, then to hospital at eleven and Ginny was born at 1:15 in the afternoon. Her delivery was much easier than Valerie's and I said to Dr Cameron, "That wasn't bad, I guess I'll make an appointment for next year." One of the nurses laughed and said, "I never heard anyone say that before." Again, I stayed at Mom's a few days. About two weeks later Grandma Cook went to Gordon and Del's wedding in Saskatoon and Grandpa, who had his leg amputated three days before Valerie was born, stayed with us. Every time Ginny made a peep he would say in his gruff voice, "let me hold that kid."

We got electricity about a month after Ginny was born – washing machine, fridge, iron and toaster. That made life easier: from gas powered that sounded like a jack hammer in a wet basement to electric on the ground floor. With two kids in diapers, a great convenience.

One evening I noticed my engagement ring was missing. I had washed that day and we had even checked where we had dumped the wash water, now frozen. At ten o'clock as I was nursing Ginny, Valerie sat up in her crib playing with a small object and there was my ring, apparently it had slipped off as I was putting her to bed, I never wore it for 29 years, then got it and wedding band resized for my birthday present in 1982. Felt like a bride.

Ronalie: May 27, 1956

The second worst time for farmer babies to be born. The day I began labor I was working in the garden. Later when we took lunch out to Pat I said I would be going to the hospital that night. Progress was slow so I put the girls to bed, had a bath and did my hair.

In the evening Bud Soura called: his cow was making more progress than I was and he needed Pat's help to deliver the calf. By eleven I thought I had better get to the hospital but when I went to phone Soura's the phone was out of order. Was I scared! Fortunately Pat came home fifteen minutes later. We took the girls to Mom's and off to hospital. At two o'clock Pat decided I was too pokey and came home. At five to three, Ronalie arrived. After three days we came home, and Mom kept the other girls a few more days. Ronalie still didn't have a name when she came home. Her unusual name came from a telephone operator at Benito, Ronale Staples Grieg, whose name was Eleanor spelled backwards. Valerie wanted a sister, Ginny wanted a brother. When Pat told them they had a sister, Ginny said, "That's what I said I wanted." Talk about an about face!

The night Ronalie was born, Dad went in to the hospital with a piece of steel in his eye. They didn't tell me though and by the time we got to Mom's he was in Winnipeg.

Our children were all good about staying around the yard but one day while I was nursing Ronalie, Valerie and Ginny disappeared. I was calling and hunting for them when Pat drove in the yard with the runaways. He was putting out peat fires half a mile down the field when he heard what sounded like magpies, looked up and they were coming at him, chattering and so proud of themselves.

Nancy and Norris: June 27, 1962

This was exciting. Three months into my pregnancy, Dr Jonat said jokingly, "You must be having twins." I said, "I hope so." I doubt if I'd have been so blatant if it had been the first one, but I now considered myself a pro and Ronalie was six years old. At five months he got serious and ordered x-rays. When I went to the hospital, the

technician said, "Sit right here," so I sat, thinking this a very odd position for an abdominal x-ray. Then his next words, "Which wrist is it?" Doctors and their atrocious handwriting!

Briefly, Dr. Jonat was concerned that they might be joined but a second x-ray revealed that they had moved. I had the second x-ray on a Friday, and he said the radiologist would read it on Monday. A weekend of worry was forestalled when he phoned Friday evening and said he could see they were obviously not joined. This was the only pregnancy where I felt clumsy – and pregnant! I felt like a mountain. June was hot, I lay on the bed in the evening with the fan beside me and panted.

June 26<sup>th</sup>, we took Valerie to the doctor as in writing exams she was getting dizzy. We would bring her home where she lay on the bed and kept her eyes shut when she had to get up. He put her in the hospital. I had my examination, and he said, "Very soon." I said, "How about Thursday, that's our 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary." He replied that it could be. However, the next morning Pat gave me a slap on the rump at 5 am as we had slept all night on the covers and since it was now cool, he wanted under. Immediately, I was in labour, and unlike the other times, felt it was urgent to get going. A very strong wind came up and Pat had quite a time holding the car on the road. From the time I awoke until Nancy was born, 64 minutes elapsed, and Norris arrived 4 minutes later. I often wondered if Pat hadn't slapped me would I have awakened too late to get to the hospital?

It was exciting for everyone when we came home. Valerie thought it was great being in the hospital as the sister of the twins. The nurses let her come in to see me and the babies. Ginny thought it was great because she could make the announcement at school with no competition from Val. I don't know about Ronalie but I expect she informed Betty, Susan and Peter, and all her animal friends. And Pat gave out over eighty

cigars. Sharon Bell came to help out and was super. I did nothing but care for babies – on three hour feedings and a six hour lapse in baby care, I was almost to the next feeding when I finished with the last baby. We had a tremendous amount of company that summer, many just to see the ‘twins’. Aunt Irma was up from Toronto so before coming over, Mom told her we had a surprise. As they drove down the road Aunt Irma could see we had changed the red brick siding to white stucco, so she thought that was the surprise. When they came in, I was tending babies in the bedroom, had just finished one and Sharon walked out with it. Aunt Irma said, “Oh a baby. So that’s the surprise!” Then I came out: “Two babies!” She didn’t even know I was pregnant. Oliver Sibbald, a friend of the Sharleys, was down for the rodeo and came out to see us. Himself a twin, he was delighted he could lord it over Violet that he saw the twins before she did.

This completed our family... I think I can safely say so at 53! There was also an early miscarriage when Ronalie was three; a year and a half before the twins, a baby boy was born at seven months, weighed 4 lbs 2 oz, and lived only 18 hours. His lungs were not well enough developed to survive. Although we felt this loss deeply and will always remember the little boy we had so briefly, in retrospect it is doubtful that we would have had Nancy and Norris and that is impossible to contemplate. It seems we were doubly compensated for that loss.

Mother’s bodies develop a defense mechanism that automatically ‘resets’ on ‘sleep’ when they have been disturbed. It has to be or they’d never get any sleep. First there is the legitimate 2 a.m. feeding for a while after a baby is born. Then there are all the illegal ‘fusses’, stuffed up noses, tummy aches, fevers, ear aches, bad dreams and wet beds ... which usually resulted in a bare bottomed two year old crawling in with us. Psychologists will tell you that you should firmly return them to their beds but I

think they must be like Albert Einstein and could function on four hours of sleep. With us Ronalie was the only one who arrived alone, the others came in pairs, and I was always in the middle.

Once we gave our bed to Clarence and Uncle Fred. Ronalie woke in the night and wanted company. By the time I realized she had headed in the wrong direction, I heard an "Oof!"... she had landed on Uncle Fred's stomach. She beat a very hasty retreat. By the symphony of snoring that was issuing from their room she should have realized; I don't think we snore like that. But one time Valerie called to me, "There is a cow outside our window." I answered her, "no there isn't, it's Dad snoring."

The 'reset' mechanism wears out after approximately sixteen years and/or your child gets a driving license and insomnia sets in until your last child leaves home, in our case fourteen years. Then, when they are all hundreds of miles away and you probably should be worrying about them, you sleep for the first time in 30 years, if arthritis hasn't replaced the kids. But that worn out reset provides your husband with a good reason why you should meet all the 2 am buses and trains. Never mind that you can get back to sleep, you can't get to sleep for fear the alarm won't go off or you won't hear it. Valerie and Ginny were the commuters and before they got their cars in 1973, I had to meet both north (Ginny in the Pas) and south (Valerie in Dauphin) buses the same night. Ronalie was never away until she was married and when Nancy left, Norris was here to meet late buses.

I was often asked what was more work: babies a year apart or twins. I could not accurately answer as when Valerie and Ginny were tiny we had wood stove, coal furnace, no running water, and no electricity until Ginny was a month old. Even then, we had few appliances: a washing machine, fridge, iron, and

toaster. But by the time Nancy and Norris arrived we had an oil furnace, electric stove and plumbing.

Beautiful weather until early September meant that drying clothes three times one week and four times the next was no problem. Then came a rainy day with three lines of soggy diapers and the clean laundry was rapidly diminishing. We called Connie Philips and by afternoon we had the clothes dryer installed. Before I could initiate it, I had to run the dripping diapers through the wringer.

But back to babies. I think twins would be easier in any case as they require the same attention. By contrast, picture what Valerie at a year old might be-and was-up to while I was nursing Ginny! They ate different foods, at different times, sleep schedules were not the same. Nancy and Norris were plunked in high chairs and fed from the same spoon, different dishes. As Gordon Smith said, they were "like baby robins, alternately opening their mouths."

By her position in the family, Ronalie, 3 ½ years younger than Ginny and six years older than the twins, should have been the easiest to care for. However, her arrival coincided with our busiest months. Before she was three months old, I was involved in harvest on top of canning and more. By eleven o'clock I had to make her formula, soak diapers, bathe her, deliver her to Hazel, cook and eat dinner. Then Valerie, Ginny and I went to haul grain until 1:30 or so when the town milkman took over. We were free until five when he left to milk his cows. One evening the passenger door on the truck was not closed properly and on the way to the field Valerie fell out – quite a fright for her and for me until I realized her tears were from fright and not pain. So they stayed in town in the evenings too.

I think as very young babies Nancy and Norris got the most attention, but I can't be sure as with them it was collectively while with the others it was individually. I

certainly had more time for them because I had such super help in the person of Sharon Bell, a sixteen year old school girl who was with us through July and August. She was quiet, efficient and pleasant; the youngest and by far the most capable help I ever had. She went about her work as if she had run our household for years and all for \$65 a month.

Our babies were all quite good except for colicky spells the first 2-3 months. With Valerie, our "guinea pig", I was convinced that we were spoiling her: I'd put her down and she'd cry. I would leave her until I couldn't stand it any longer. When the colic was over she was quite content to stay put.

One night there was a party at Bud Cook's and about 2 a.m. Gordon Cook and Bud decided we should be at it. Our door was locked so Gordon took screen off of our bedroom window and climbed in and woke us up. Valerie, in her crib, woke up and Gordon picked her up, whereupon she wet on him. While we reluctantly dressed for the party, Gordon sat with a gas lamp drying out his pants!

Ginny and the others benefitted from coming later in the family. Nancy was exceptionally good; I could feed her and without even a burp, back to sleep till next feeding. Norris was a very touchy eater, spit up a lot through his first year and a lot of stomachaches. I recall one day I wasn't getting a lot done because Ronalie was so fussy so I decided to go to town and shop. I laid her on the counter and she promptly went to sleep, so many times thereafter I laid her on a blanket on the dining room table. She seemed to like hard surfaces.

Ginny did the most spectacular solo when she began to walk. I was attending Valerie, and Ginny was crawling on the hall floor. Suddenly she walked past me into the dining room; I did not see her very first steps! Valerie walked with the aid of an adult finger for over a month before going it alone. Her takeoff was from Pat to me and

vice versa across the living room. I don't know why Ronalie's first steps are not indelibly etched into my brain, maybe because she was seventeen months before she ventured alone. I can't conjure up visions of her, Nancy or Norris when they decided to try out the upright life.

I am sure position in family determines much of a person's character. Being no psychologist I do not attempt to reason the whys and wherefores but for what it is worth, these observations came from my experiences with five "ids."

Valerie, as the oldest, was very responsible from age two. Once Ginny was out in her second year, Valerie kept a sharp eye on her and reported to me if she took two steps in the wrong direction. She herself was not particularly brave about going outside alone to play. Valerie was a diligent student, dependable at home, and gregarious. She makes and keeps many friends, and is generous to a fault; worrying over and bosses all of her siblings. Sometimes I think she mothers them more than I do.

Ginny, just one year younger, is very competitive. Perhaps because of Valerie's year seniority she wanted to keep up. Going through grade school with amazing ease she floundered through high school with great difficulty, far more interested in extracurricular activities. She is very uncritical and sees mostly good in others. I don't know if she was a born dawdler or worked at it but she has always been behind. We took turns driving kids to school with the Jeffrey's, and Homer offered her a chocolate bar if she ever got to the road before Val. She was never able to collect. She loves paper work and organizing everything but her own life. Unlike Valerie, who makes and spends a lot of money, Ginny knows where every cent comes from and goes to. Valerie once said, "If Ginny took in \$100 and spent \$102, she would



still find a way to save some."

Ronalie would have to be considered the middle child; she is in between two groups of two even though she is the third of four births. In many respects she was typical. She was more of a loner than any of the others, and her love of reading and animals likely stemmed from her lack of companionship. She loved dogs, cats and cattle. Every one of the cattle were named, some very strange, like 'Greah', which according to Ronalie means love in ape language. She was "too young" to do the things Val and Ginny did, and "too old" to get away with the things Nancy and Norris did. Fortunately that did not undermine her self confidence. She was rather rebellious in her early teens and in grade nine did not do well. However that was over by grade ten and she completed high school with good grades. Her big talent was for writing and today her long letters about the ordinary life of wife and mother are enjoyed by all who read them. As Ginny said, after reading twenty three pages, "I just felt like I'd had a half hour visit with Ronalie."

Nancy and Norris - especially in the early years - were a 'pair'. Although very different in personality, they were very close. They were in the same class in grades one and two until in grade three, when they were separated under the pompous assumption that it was good for them. This upset Norris in particular; Nancy was only mad. When I went to school on parent's day, his teacher said, "at the beginning of the year, Norris was not doing very well, so I put him with the slow readers group and now I find he should be with the advanced class." I replied, "...and I know why." I explained that the separation had been so traumatic for him. If they are so smart to know they should be separated, they were rather dense about the result! Norris was the talker and asked endless questions, however Nancy was always around. I guess she found she got answers without the

effort of thinking of questions. I think being twins of the opposite sex gave them a natural self-confidence with each other's friends as they were used to them from the day they started school. If Nancy's friends came, Norris was included and vice versa.

Aside from their special relationship with each other, being the youngest they were petted and bossed by the other girls. Also, since Valerie and Ginny were working they got some pretty nice gifts. I suppose if anyone was spoiled it was them, but I don't think they were.

Having twins proved to me that babies are born with very distinct personalities. With a single birth, by a baby's contentment or discontentment, parents assume they're doing everything right or everything wrong. However, as I said before, Nancy from birth wanted only to sleep and eat while Norris was restless. Nancy remained the placid one and Norris is the goer. No doubt environment counts for a lot: the upbringing may channel their strengths positively or negatively, or it could overcome or accent weaknesses, but the basic character is the individual's. So kids, take a bow for your success and don't blame us for your failures!

## 2 DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

*Whatever they lacked in housekeeping skills  
they made up for in cooking.*

For a while in the '70s I published a weekly newspaper, "Cook's Chronicles" using carbon copies to send Val, Ginny and others in lieu of letters. I mention this to introduce the following letter to the 'What Shall I do' or, 'Advice to the love (or otherwise) lorn' column.

*Dear JL: My problem is - what else? - my mother. She thinks I should keep my room clean and I don't. Having a few items out of place gives me a sense of security but a completely orderly room seems to close in on me. How can I convince her?*

*--A teenager*

*Answer: I am quite certain you will never be closed in on. Furthermore, you have left yourself wide open to criticism. You teenagers holler your heads off about pollution of the environment and ecology but don't you know that charity begins at home? Most of you have rooms that are an open invitation to termites, bedbugs, cockroaches and most larvae to say nothing of typhoid germs and hitherto unknown bacteria.*

This seems to sum up the housekeeping credo of our kids. My solution to the whole problem was to stay downstairs and when I was forced to go upstairs gave my lungs a good workout and grounded the culprits till something was done about it.

Norris at three was very particular. He shared a bedroom with Nancy and Ronalie and every night anything that was out of place was shoveled into the hall: enough to form a road block. Not so his crib though; he went to sleep every night surrounded by toys while Nancy would tolerate nothing with her.

Whatever they lacked in housekeeping skills they made up for in cooking. All the kids started baking very young, before they could read well. But with supervision there were no disasters. In March 1962 we got an electric stove and Valerie, Ginny and I were all baking that afternoon. I think Valerie made date oat cake and Ginny made oatmeal crisps.

Valerie was good in all departments and gets better every year; she cooks like a gourmet. Ginny is quite adventurous, likes to do her own thing. I had quite a reputation for bread at our fall horticultural show. In 1980, her second year back here, I was done in by my own daughter. She won 1st on the Co-op Special and on brown bread! Of course, I had done the same thing to my Mom some years earlier.

Ronalie had a preference for meat dishes, casseroles and biscuits. Nancy loved making sweets - and eating them too! When they were quite young Nancy, Norris, Kelly and Myrna made a concoction called butterballs. In spite of being mostly notable as a crumbly mess, they were not deterred. Every time they got together it was, "can we make butterballs?" To this day, I have no idea what an ideal butterball should be like as their ensuing efforts continued to be a crumbly mess.

But Nancy's consuming and enduring passion was for unbaked cookies. She would have a yen<sup>1</sup> to make them any hour of the day or night; so much so that after she went away from home and Norris was meeting a 2 AM bus for her, I left a note: "No. Nancy you cannot make unbaked cookies, *go to bed.*" This inspired Valerie to fill tupperware with brown sugar (or is it white?) oatmeal, coconut, and cocoa for Nancy's wedding shower, and further inspired Ginny to make a plate full and present them to Nancy at Nancy and Russell's wedding supper.

Norris did as much baking as Nancy. Cameron would come out and envy them happily making a mess - his mother never would let him. One day he and Nancy made chocolate chip cookies so I gave him some to take home to show his Mom he was a good cook. Later I asked him how she liked them, and he replied, "I was hungry so I ate them on the way home."

Norris, Russell and pizza were about on par with Nancy and unbaked cookies. Cook's cheese or tomato sauce would walk over to the Jeffrey's or their mushrooms or bacon or whatever would head our way. They made excellent pizzas so I was always happy when our kitchen was host... if I hollered loud enough I got a taste!

Once Norris was making a chocolate cake and I assume he had beaters on high gear because he came outside and said he got batter on the curtains. I said, "so wash them." Which he did. Suited me fine as the curtains were dirty anyhow!

Valerie and Ginny helped me with dishes when quite small. One way to keep them at it was to "race the clock." When the twins were born, the girls did them alone, and it ended up being Valerie 80% and Ginny 20%.

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<sup>1</sup> The yen in this expression comes from the Chinese yan, meaning "a craving."

I could always tell when Ginny wanted to go out because she would actually do something other than dry. When Valerie left, Ginny and Ronalie were on K.P.<sup>2</sup> but in the interest of getting things done, I had to help. When Ginny left, Ronalie hated doing silverware so she made Nancy do it. When Ronalie left, Nancy, who also hated doing silverware, simply left it, since I had failed to supply her with a younger sibling to take over. I was on my way back to square one.

In hindsight, its fortunate Valerie likes doing dishes as she can sure dirty them! One day last summer we came home and an hour later the counter was covered with dirty dishes. Val said, "We sure made a mess in a hurry." I looked the situation over and replied, "All that I can see that I have used is vinegar jug and saucepan." In hindsight, I think Ginny is still waiting for Valerie to gather dishes and get started since she's never caught up; unfortunately for her, Val is 325 miles away.

In cooking class, I was surprised at the expensive foods the school financed; there was nothing basic about their menus - like chicken kiev for example. Toward the end of the course, in groups of three, they were to cook a meal and invite someone to dine with them and judge it. I don't know whether the other mother's knew more than I did about this particular trio - Nancy, Carol Marchuk and Jane Moore - and their cooking prowess, or maybe the girls thought I was a softer touch but I was the honored guest and duly presented myself at the school cafeteria. I will admit that my experiences at dining out are only a shade above McDonald's but I certainly got the red carpet treatment that day. I was relieved of my coat, had a corsage pinned on, ushered to my seat. There I had three

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<sup>2</sup> "Keep Peeling" or K.P Duty in reference to military kitchen duty.

charming waitresses at my beck and call, who became my charming dinner companions when not serving me. Now I ask you, even if that meal had been lousy, could I give them less than an A? Especially considering that while I marked the questionnaire, they stood breathing down my neck armed with a meat cleaver, an ice pick and Tums. The meal actually was excellent; where do you think I learned about chicken kiev?

After one cooking class when we were having pie for dessert, Nancy took up a forkful, studied it, and told me, "your pie isn't bad, Mom. It's supposed to have seven rows of flakes and yours has five." Well I have news for you, my little home-ec whiz: you don't even have to know how to count to judge good pastry; just stuff it in your mouth.

This is as good a time as any to relate the tale of Nancy's no layer pastry. We were in Winnipeg this past spring or summer and Nancy decided to make blueberry tarts. She got the tart shells made and hydro went kaput. The next morning she asked me to finish them, which I obligingly did. Dad and I tested them – filling was okay but the pastry defied our dentures. Nancy came home and was so disappointed. She said, "you gave me the recipe and said it was good." Later she brought me the recipe, I took one look and burst out laughing. It was my recipe all right, but it was for perogies! I guess home-ec failed to explain that the high ratio of shortening makes those seven flaky layers (or five if you're 'not bad').

That same time, Valerie said that she could go shopping that morning at ten as she was baking Russell's birthday cake and it would be ready by then. At ten she phoned down to say that she was ready and we were soon away. Couple of hours later we returned – she had forgotten to take the cake out of the oven! She had to work so left me to bake another cake. I had Pat running up and down the hall borrowing things from Nancy, things that I couldn't

find (among which was flour). I finished the cake two hours later and picked up the recipe book to put it away. I found it had been sitting on one giant Tupperware container of flour.

Two months later, Valerie brought that first cake home. She knows anything will get eaten here. I combined it with a heavy light cake I had made, dream whip, lemon pudding and coconut to concoct a delicious disaster pudding. The reason anything will get eaten here is not that I am such a bad cook but because if I scorch a pan of cookies or make a poor cake, I just leave it out on the counter and it disappears. I never have to eat it, and that method worked with my kids and now with my grandkids. It almost did me in with Darby though! I had a cake ready to take with me to Dads for supper and Darby was tying into it when I screamed at him. He said, "But you said anything sitting on the counter can be eaten." Well shut my big mouth!

Shortly after Ginny left home she decided to make a Christmas cake, so I gave her a recipe. One evening she phoned saying she had it in the oven for 7 hours and it was still not cooking. I said something about not enough flour and she said, "Flour? It doesn't call for any flour." This was one of Mom's recipes and she cooked by feel so added "enough" flour at the end, so I did the same and didn't have flour written down. So, another disaster pudding. Ginny made a sauce for it and I think it lasted several years. It was a big recipe.

But she tried again, and this time she asked for a bread recipe. I made big batches and never measured anything. I knew she would only want a few loaves, so I cut down my approximate amounts accordingly but apparently it was not enough. Does anyone know how to make disaster pudding out of five or six loaves of poor quality concrete? This prompted the following article in Cook's Chronicles under, "Recipes of the Week."



*This week we are featuring Miss Virginia Cook and her bread - just like mother used to make. Miss Cook says: "The first and basic rule is never listen to one cotton pickin' thing your old lady says. I learned the hard way," remarked Miss Cook as she struck a match, touched it to the recipe her mother had given her and watched it disintegrate into a small pile of ash. "I thought if you can't trust your mother, who can you trust, so I went to her and asked how to make bread. She wrote out two pages of drivel and the bread came out yucky. I followed every direction and when I threw the bread out it wouldn't even burn. Someone dug it out of the garbage and laid it in the sidewalk where some concrete had broken out." Miss Cook's advice to novice bread bakers is: "hunt up a recipe in any cookbook, or just play it by ear; you couldn't do worse either way."*

But Ginny had sweet revenge a few years later when, as I said previously, she beat me in the bread competition.

Nancy and Ronalie both took home economics in Swan. The course was divided into sewing, cooking and child care. In sewing Ronalie decided she wanted to make a bush jacket. She went to Cox's and picked out the material, then needed it in a hurry and commissioned me to get it for her; I bought what sounded like her description. I expect what she wanted was a hunk of plaid flannel, what I bought was red and blue checked fortrel<sup>3</sup>. Since she had to get on with it, but not what she wanted,

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<sup>3</sup> A trade name for polyester. The wonder fabric of the sixties and seventies: didn't fade or fray, bright varied colours and all kinds of "gosh awful" weaves—best used for quilts, but the word conjures up horrid pantsuits.

she made the jacket for me. If I am not mistaken, she got an A+ on it, highest mark in class, and I got a jacket which I have worn for the last ten years - probably more than any other article of clothing. If I say I put it on every time I feel chilly, you will know just how much I have worn it!

Getting back to home-ec, in the child care segment, there was an assignment on pregnancy and each student was to interview two mothers. Ronalie chose Ginny as one of the mothers and one of the questions asked for do's and don'ts while pregnant. Ginny answered with quite a lengthy – and sane – list till her final one, “Don't ride on buses while pregnant or your child will have big ears.” Of such statement are – not babies with big ears – but old wives tales born. There was a ridiculous basis to her statement as she did ride buses and Darby did have big ears, but so did his mother and I never rode buses!

Norris took shops, which is carpentry of sorts, in grade nine. He made a neat little table which we still use. He also made me a wooden tray complete with handles which I never used until one day, bemoaning the lack of shelf space in my dishes cupboard; I had the bright idea of turning it upside down and with the handles as legs. I could have saucers and bread and butter plates on top and breakfast plates below. Now if someone can offer a practical use for one ten inch ornately carved mahogany leg, I'll be batting one thousand.

Ronalie was always more interested in sewing than cooking, but one day she stuffed a chicken and you never saw a more beautifully sewn up bird. I don't recall what the stuffing was like but I do know those intricate stitches wouldn't even let steam escape. When I saw it I said it was obviously done by a surgeon or a seamstress. A surgeon she was not but she was, and is a prolific sewer, and makes many of her own and children's clothes and for other's as well as many cute and/or useful gift items.

Valerie made herself quite a few dresses and does a

good job considering she was deprived of 4H, she was famous for hemming her dresses while the rest of us were getting ready for a gala occasion to which she would wear it. Valerie's forte is crocheting; she taught herself and does a lovely job of afghans, full-size and baby, and smaller items. I tried to teach Ginny to knit and crochet but she being a southpaw it seemed I was in the same boat as she was, knowing nothing. Ginny is a good sewer but since getting married has done very little.

Nancy has a natural ability for sewing, never seems to make goofs like the rest of us mortals. When she was eleven she made herself a black and white plaid taffeta dress for Barb's wedding, the only thing I helped her with was the gathered waist. In home-ec class she made a skirt and blouse which her teacher thought was worthy of competition in Brandon, prize a sewing machine – which she did not win. She made her own wedding dress, going away outfit, and many of her clothes, also sews for others as gifts.

Of all the laundry, socks were the bane of my washdays. They simply disappeared, never to be seen again; not in pairs, but singly. I had a theory that one day we will ascertain that U.F.O.'s are operated by one legged Martians who come in a variety of sizes from infants 0 to men's size 12. Then Valerie read a theory (oh no, I don't stand along in this dilemma) that they have become victims of a time warp. So I picture them up there in the year 2525 waiting for their mates. Descendents, will you please break it to them gently that their partners were cremated some 540 years earlier?

They don't all go either of those ways, though. Once when repairing the dryer Pat pulled out 5 socks for a two year old and Nancy and Norris were then 12-13 years old. Sometimes they've gotten down in the spin dryer where they became thoroughly shredded and cause considerable grief. Socks turn up that I've never seen before. If singly

then I suspect the Martians have made a trade; if in pairs I suspect I'm doing the neighbourhood laundry. Ronalie and Renée were bad for that but it was never Renée's socks, it was Colin's, Marc's or Art's. Norris and his friends were forever mixing but not matching for a really impressive array of mismatched socks. Check under the sink (bathroom) of the apartment Norris shares with Tim and Paul! That is the last word!

### 3 SCHOOL

*When a child, particularly your first one, starts school, virtually everything he or she has learned, you have taught...Or was the case pre-TV days.*

There is a saying, “Behind every successful man there is a woman.” Change that to, “Behind every successful student, there is a mom,” and I am right with you. If that is not true there are a good many misspent hours of my life. To name a few: practicing speeches, learning times tables, and memorizing, editing compositions, researching projects, asking spelling words, solving arithmetic problems, and even on one occasion, helping Valerie with physics which I never even took - simply by listening and as she explained her problem to me, she had the answer.

We sent kids to school for 23 years. That, with perfect attendance, means 12,000 lunches. Give or take a few hundred missed days, that is still a lot of lunches. If, after Valerie had completed 2 years of school and Ginny one, I could have projected I still had 11,600 lunches to make I would have thought in terms of 11.600 bologna sandwiches as that was all they wanted.

On April 1st, can’t remember which kids I did it to, but I inserted a piece of bread sized paper in each

sandwich inscribed “April Fool.” Only time in twenty three years that I was complimented on lunch.

The year the twins were born, figuring I was busy enough in the morning tending them and getting others ready for school, I made and froze a week’s supply of sandwiches on Sunday night. No one objected, mainly because their unsympathetic mother would’ve told them, “Make them yourself.”

Valerie and Ginny occasionally had the treat of going to Grandma Cook’s for lunch, usually with the menu arranged in advance. Sleepovers pretty well evened out; for every extra lunch there would be one less another time.

Valerie was so tired when she first started school that she would request to go to bed at seven o’clock. Although she kept well occupied in her pre-school days, once she was in school she was at a loss as to what to do on weekends and holidays. She loved to impart her new found knowledge to Ginny who was a very willing pupil with the result that Ginny was very well grounded for Grade one. She needed to be as she missed 50-60 days her first year, but still managed an average of 99.5 at Easter<sup>4</sup>. She got rid of her infected tonsils as soon as school was out and her severe fevers, constant colds plus hospitalization for pneumonia became a thing of the past. One day Valerie came home and announced that Penny had “p-pneumonia.” I corrected her, explaining that although there was a ‘p’ in it, it was silent. But she wasn’t buying that. Penny’s was different, it was “p-pneumonia.” Hopefully after 13 years in the nursing profession this little anecdote will not start another argument!

I’ll never forget when Valerie stood up after supper

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<sup>4</sup> Correction: it was grade 2 that Ginny got 99.5 average

one night and with no preliminaries launched into (with appropriate actions), "Way up in the tree, two big apples. I shook the tree real hard. Down came the apples, mmmm were they good." I was surprised and most impressed! Several times Valerie 'taught' a lower grade when a teacher had to take part of the class to the festival in Swan. Mrs. Sims gave her a scarf and glove set in appreciation. Incidentally, Mrs. Sims taught all five of our kids and also taught Pat and his brothers and sisters. As well she wrote and read the speech given at our shower held after we were married.

When Valerie was in Grade III<sup>5</sup>, her teacher Miss Pettit was a real stickler on multiplication tables and assigned writing them out 10 or 12 each as homework nightly. It was never very popular and one night when her arm was very red and swollen from a booster shot, Valerie was more than a little indignant. I thought it was rather much at the time but I must admit that Valerie and Ginny (who also had to do them) knew the work thoroughly whereas Nancy and Norris were still asking me what 7x9 or 8x7 was in high school. Where did Ronalie stand in all this? Nowhere, she loathed maths and her theory was if she ignored it, it would go away. She spent all her time on English and history, which she loved and did well in. Valerie had a theory too, if you wrote a long enough paper the teachers would assume you knew everything there was on the subject and give top marks. They did on occasion beg for mercy... and she did get top marks.

Ginny cruised along for years on natural ability so when the time came that she needed to study she had no

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<sup>5</sup> Valerie and Ginny did poorly in school that year. It was the first year having TV and their marks at Christmas were down in the eighties! After that, Mom and Dad laid down the law about how much TV could be watched.

idea how. Plus she had a greater interest in extra-curricular activities; she thought if she ignored ALL the subjects they'd go away!

Before consolidation, two grades were in the same room so every few years Valerie and Ginny were in class together. I hated that as they were always telling on each other. I figured if it was serious enough for me to know about it, I would hear. I guess because they enjoyed the rapport of twins, Nancy and Norris did not tattle on each other and were not competitive in their school work at which they were remarkably equal.

When they were in Grade II they had a period once a week when they were to tell an interesting news item. At supper time one night Nancy said, "I told the class Mommy wears Daddy's long underwear to haul grain." Whoopee! Don't we lead an exciting life?! Nancy and Norris took advantage of the band program starting in Grade VII. Nancy playing the flute, Norris the trumpet. Nancy played three years. Norris continued through to grade 12. Mostly, I suspect, to take advantage of some neat trips, some I recall included Saskatoon, Red Deer and I believe Calgary.

One year Valerie and Ginny were both entered to do speeches at the Festival - Valerie on John F. Kennedy, Ginny on Abraham Lincoln. If I wasn't the audience, I still had to listen as they stood in the middle of the kitchen staring at the clock and speeding up or slowing down as the second hand dictated. Those two illustrious people were not my favorite people for a long time afterwards.

Ronalie had a brief singing career when a group of girls did 'Maxwell's Silver Hammer' for 4H and entertainment. It was quite a hit and they performed at the Ladies Curling Banquet and on "Talent Night" over CKDM.

Ginny starred as Marley in "A Christmas Carol" and for weeks (maybe months) after continued her role for the



entertainment (got it right this time!) of her younger siblings and anyone else willing - or unwilling - to listen. From there she continued to ghost stories which had a traumatic effect on Norris in particular.

Science fairs came into vogue after Valerie and Ginny finished school. When Ronalie was in XI or XII her project was to hatch chicks. She got a dozen sitting eggs and had no luck so started again. I believe the idea was to open an egg a day and record the progress. However with a second start she did not have any mature chicks by fair day. I was not impressed on visiting that particular science fair that some students were dissecting a cat.

When Nancy and Norris got to science fair age, those who participated were given a bus trip to Winnipeg to see Museum of Man and Nature and the planetarium. They were given the royal treatment, billeted in school gyms and fed at McDonalds. After three days they were happy to come home to Mom's plain old meat, potatoes and vegetables. This from two kids who thought fast food joints were the last stop this side of heaven!

### *Accomplishments*

I am not recording the following successes to brag—well, maybe just a little--mostly they are small triumphs but in case kids forget or they may want some proof when they brag to their kids "...when I was your age..."

In Grade III Valerie was 2nd for the year and won \$3.00, the same year Ginny was first in Grade II and won \$5.00.

In Grade III Ginny was second. Valerie won \$2.00 at a spelling bee at P.T.A. and Ginny was school champ and went on to Swan but went down to defeat in the second round on "urge."

The Legion sponsored essay contests for Remembrance Day. Ginny won in 1964, Valerie won in

1966, Ronalie won in 1968 and Norris came second in 1976. First prize was \$10.00 and I suppose second was \$5.00. The best articles were judged provincially and Valerie's was chosen second in Manitoba. Nancy was probably busy making unbaked cookies, but four out of five ain't bad.

There were frequent awards (usually a book) for various accomplishments such as perfect attendance, spelling and so on and I think they all won at one time or another. Norris won a special award when he was about Grade VIII. On Athlete's Awards night he was presented with a T-shirt emblazoned "Bowsman I.M. Stats," and his name, as he kept records of intramural sports. In Grade IX he took on planning the food for junior high bonspiel. When I went to parent-teacher interviews later, Mr. Terekoff told me he was amazed when Norris came to school the next day; he not only had the amounts each was to bring but he had assigned what each participating student was to bring--so fairly divided, too!

Ronalie has one negative claim to fame. Her name is on a trophy at SVRSS for "Reach for the Top." But it was at someone else's expense as she was not on the winning team.<sup>6</sup>

Valerie finished school at Bowsman, the last complete class to do so.<sup>7</sup>

Valerie won the Mildred Nelson scholarship for the

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<sup>6</sup> It was Renée's name that was supposed to be on there. One of the last things Marcel did before he left SVRSS as librarian was to send the trophy away to be corrected. Several years later at Ronalie's high school reunion she looked...and there was her name still gracing the trophy--they'd removed the wrong name!

<sup>7</sup> Correction: The General course was already in Swan. The University Entrance Course was phased out of Bowsman the year Ginny graduated (for Grade XII). Ronalie took grades XI and XII in Swan.

best female student at BCI. Mildred Nelson grew up here and although she has lived in the U.S. many years, she keeps a place in her heart for Bowsman and honors the memory of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Don Clark. Since there is no more Bowsman high, her philanthropy is now enjoyed by the residents of the Manor. Valerie was also valedictorian<sup>8</sup> for all the Swan Valley grads and she made it all the way through without once going to the bathroom<sup>9</sup>.

Valerie and Ginny were always very active in planning and preparing for their bonspiels, youth group suppers, prom, lunches etc. Ginny's kudos were not notable, she was just happy to be graduating after writing a couple of sups. Nor were Ronalie's but two of her gang got scholarships which shows she kept brainy company.

Nancy and Norris won the "Mutt and Jeff" award at the Nonsense Awards during the banquet. Maybe not the most distinguished honour but better in my opinion than "drunk of the year" and a few others.

I believe Valerie was the most diligent all around student. Ginny, considering her ability, the least. Ronalie, as I said before, was very conscientious in the subjects she liked. Nancy and Norris were good average students but I felt their input could have been better. Norris and Ginny, southpaws, had particularly nice handwriting and Ronalie and Norris displayed artistic ability.

Our philosophy was, and is, that they make their own choice in what to do with their lives. Maybe that is a copout but at that age mother and father don't necessarily

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<sup>8</sup> Valerie was casually asked to be valedictorian by the principal one day when they saw one another in Swan River.

<sup>9</sup> After being teased about needing a catheter to get through her speech, Valerie made sure she snuck out of the ceremony and into the washroom before she went on stage!

know best and they can't come back on us if they don't like the decision. Valerie made her decision early and made the right one. She is an excellent, if neurotic, nurse... which has nothing to do with her profession. Babysitting her at age three while picking berries, Mom said when we returned, "Your eldest daughter is a hypochondriac."

Much of Ginny's preschool play was devoted to setting up office – desk, toy phone, papers scattered about. I thought then that she'd be a business woman and in the labor force. In her own home she is just that – fortunately for the rest of us as sometimes our financial wheeling and dealing with each other would defy Wall Street. Ronalie, who never played with dolls, seems to have achieved her ambition in the role of wife and mother. Maybe her love of animals decided her to produce her own little pets. I still think she could make a fortune writing Harlequin Romances! Nancy is an enigma, she professed no great ambition at any one time. Oh yes, just after she graduated she was reading an article in Reader's Digest and said, "Do you know hookers make up to \$60,000 a year?" I said, "Forget it, Nancy!" She held a number of jobs and was not too enthused about any of them but all of her life she has been a homebody.

Norris was undecided when he finished school so when offered a job at the Co-op he took it. After two years he decided on business administration, a wise decision as at the Co-op he had excellent P.R. and a good analytical mind. On the debit side he may be confined to running a sidewalk café as would never keep track of keys to an office – one teacher called him her absentminded little professor. I called him – well never mind – but I could fill this book with the things I've hunted for him. But stop smiling, daughters of mine, because (like your father before you), when I told any of you where something was – "Top dresser drawer right hand side" – you'd stop at the bedroom door, look vaguely around and

complain, "I can't find it." I finally caught on to the fact that in your rooms it was the dresser you couldn't find!

In 1968 school consolidation was instituted, in Valerie's final and the twin's first year, and officially our driving days were over as kids were bussed. But unofficially there were side trips for forgotten lunches, forgotten homework, wet jeans, torn jeans, deliver Hallowe'en costumes or science fair projects – don't scientists ever have 'little' experiments that a bus can handle? – or someone ill. Once I went to Swan to pick up Nancy as we were curling in Ladies Bonspiel. When I got there I found out we were a full rink – Cindy and Carol had signed out for curling too but didn't specify they were merely onlookers.

We were fortunate to be on a direct bus route, that is kids were picked up second last in am (8:35) and got off second at night. (4:15) Only once in the twelve bus years did kids miss it. Just after Christmas, Jan 4/74 to be exact, after late nights and early mornings during the holidays, we slept in until nine. Took the kids in at ten. At noon, bus driver Hugo Seib phoned to see if we were still alive. When kids didn't come out he had sent Kevin in and we never even heard him.

There was one other incident I got a bang out of. I was at The Pas visiting Valerie, me the morning dope, while bright eyed father is at home with the kids. And guess who slept in? Never happened to me when he was away.

### *Driving lessons*

Now, just to make you all feel better, I will confess a few sins. First I will tell on Valerie and Ginny. Valerie hit a post turning in the road to the swimming hole when going to pick up the twins from swimming lessons. She

also ran the truck into the combine. Ginny once ripped chrome off while backing out of the garage. But I did worse. Two weeks after we got the Rambler, I backed out of the garage without noticing the door on the back passenger side was ajar. The momentum caused the door to open further and there was a resounding crunch. I was really sick... with our previous car - an Austin - I could have backed out with both doors open and never have touched either one!

I managed to bang the Austin too, though. Someone else had hit it in town and I was taking it to the body shop. Pat was right ahead of me with truck and as he pulled up to the stop sign I slid on ice right into the back of the truck. Kept it in the family, anyhow! Not so my third, and, I hope, final accident. When I left Griffiths after doing Rose's hair, I wasn't watching where I was backing up and rammed the side of their car. I went back in the house and waited until Hugh came home to move it as they were so tight I was afraid I'd do more damage.

Ronalie drove all the time they lived in Portage on a learner's license and she got a speeding ticket in Brandon. Ginny ran a red light in Winnipeg and had a minor accident. She also ditched her car coming down from Steeprock and another time at the Overflow when a passing truck snow blinded her. Norris has had two speeding tickets and one accident similar to my last one. Nancy is fussy about what she damages. She dented her in-laws car in a Winnipeg parking lot after they were kind enough to lend it to take their wedding gifts to Winnipeg. Val was hit in Dauphin when driving her Datsun but it wasn't her fault.

Pat was the victim of the most damaging impact while we were holidaying in Alberta. He left our campsite in Medicine Hat to call Johnny Renner, Elmer's brother-in-law, before he went to work. Johnny said he lived nearby and insisted he come for coffee. En route, a truck

slammed into the rear passenger door. The truck had stalled and when he got it started he gunned it right into Pat who never saw him coming. Meanwhile, back at the camp we had everything packed up to leave, the sun was getting hotter, shade was non-existent and after two hours we were getting slightly irritated. Could not open that door until we got back to Swan and had it repaired.

### *Sports-a-thons*

Walkathons followed by a myriad array of other 'thon's' began in the 60s. The first one our kids participated in was Birch to Swan – 23 miles. Ginny was away for cross country but Ronalie, Valerie and Doreen took part. Ronalie made it in 7 hours and 10 minutes, Val and Doreen in 8 hours and 40 minutes. The following year on a beautiful November day, Ronalie and Ginny did the walk from the Foothills Garage to Bowsman. Nancy took part in a walkathon in which the kids lapped the track at Swan Valley Regional Secondary School for night and day. It was held the night we changed from standard to daylight savings time. Nancy was to start at six a.m. but confusion as to which time it was resulted in a phone call from Cindy and I got Nancy down there by 6:25.

Valerie, Ginny and Nancy were involved in volleyball but Ronalie preferred basketball. Valerie and Ginny played softball in junior grades although Ginny admits she was always afraid of the ball. When they were in Grade VII and VIII Albert Baldwin used to pile a whole team of girls in his car and drive out to the country schools for games. Ronalie played hockey for a couple of winters. She played goal for a girls team which to my knowledge was the only girls team ever fielded in Bowsman. Their opposition was organized boys teams several years younger. Nancy and Norris were in organized softball in the lower grades. It only lasted for May and June but that

was long enough as often Pat would take Norris to one game and I would take Nancy to hers, different towns, same night.

Field days – what can I say? It was the one time that the kids willingly acknowledged me as their maternal parent. We'd send them off to school in the morning with spending money but by the time I got there they would find me like I was wired for radar. The big day was invariably cold and/or rainy or so hot that the redheads came home with their skin much redder than their hair. The older girls competed and could win 1, 2 or 3, but by the time Nancy and Norris were into it, they were divided into teams and went through a series of eight competitions, some ridiculously simple. They got a slim colored ribbon for each one completed and the top three teams won ribbons. Mothers were team leaders. I got a couple of ribbons, once with Nancy on my team.

Ginny was into cross country running and took part in competitions at St. Rose, Neepawa, Brandon, Roblin, and Winnipeg twice. Her standings were: 4<sup>th</sup> out of ten, 13<sup>th</sup> of 110, 18<sup>th</sup> of 100, 18<sup>th</sup> of 65, and 3<sup>rd</sup> of 16.

Norris began playing hockey the winter of 1970 and for the next five years we were a very enthusiastic hockey family. This was from when he was seven until he was twelve years old. He was not an aggressive player, sort of hung around the edge of the action but managed to score a number of goals in his five years and on occasion the winning goal. But it was a family affair and almost a way of life. There were regular practices, games in and out of town, tournaments were all day long affairs. If the game was local, we worked, if out of town, we went for the day. On one occasion Valerie, Ginny and Darby drove down from The Pas to attend one of his games, and left again the next morn. Norris and Owen went to Flin Flon once with the Kenville team for a weekend tournament.

If you ever want to learn whose kid is who, just attend



a hockey game. The parents will be screaming their kid's name even if he's in the players' box. And small wonder as they are so encased in equipment, maybe Mom and Pop don't know (their own kid).

When Norris was 12 he left hockey with nary a backward glance, went into 4H and curling where he was much more at home. But that was not the end of our hockey involvement. We became interested in the Midgets and Juniors and went to a lot of their games. It seemed our winters were spent in the skating rink.

Pat and I curled the first few years after we were married but gave it up when pigs and kids made it seem like work. In school Valerie began curling in 1963, Ginny in 1965, Ronalie, 1969, Nancy in 1974 and Norris in 1975. There was 4H curling for all but Valerie (and Ginny only one year). After about 18 years away from the roaring game, Pat and I began curling again in 1976 when we joined mixed curling with Nancy and Norris. When we first started, everyone thought it was so "sweet" that we were curling with our twelve year old kids but by the time they were finished school, the same people were complaining "powerhouse." Nancy and I curled a game and it was over but Pat and Norris drove us bananas with instant replay of every shot (of theirs!).

We curled together until kids finished school and in that time won several prizes plus a trophy for the club championship. My first ever trophy! I always dreamed of curling in a bonspiel with three of my daughters but the best to date is two. Ginny, Nancy and I plus Monica Black were in the ladies' in 1980 and played in 1st event final where we went down to defeat badly when we gave up a seven ender on the fourth. The following year Ginny and I curled with Olga Hayman and Marie Greider and bowed out playing 2nd event final. In 1979, Nancy and I went into Women's with Pearl Fraser and Carol Marchuk but did not do very well. In 1978 Nancy and I with Val

Jeffrey and Val Cook won scarves and dry cleaning vouchers for most games without getting into the prizes.

Summing up: Valerie has continued to curl in Winnipeg, Ginny did some when with MTS in The Pas and in some bonspiels since moving here in 1979. Ronalie gave up after school but having moved to Minto the summer of '88 she may again become involved, especially since she got back to the roaring game Christmas of '88 when she curled with Rob Hanke, Glenda and Heather Jeffrey in Swan and since Tanis and Aaron have begun the game. Nancy and Russell curled in Winnipeg in the Charleswood mixed league with Val and Norris, later with others. Russell was always rather indifferent to curling until 1979 when at Christmas he skipped a rink consisting of Nancy, Cameron Smith and Valerie and they won chocolates. That gave Russell such a boost that he has been an avid and accurate curler ever since.

Last – but definitely not least – is Norris. He has won so many trophies and prizes, as well as been a Curl Canada instructor. He represented his zone in Junior Men's playdowns and also Red River Community College as well as college playdowns at The Pas. For prizes and trophies won, see “Our Family Tree”—a book dedicated to our family history.

I cannot sign off on sports without coverage of our participation in Homecoming Slow Pitch Baseball Family style. Some indication of our prowess in this sport is obvious from Norris' remark when he arrived and joined in the well-on-the-way game. “I knew we were in trouble when everyone was so anxious to have me play.”

It is only right that I should end with curling. Just to say what the Cook women could not accomplish, the men did with Bowsman Hotel trophy in 1984 – Norris, Tim Warkentin, Keith Kelly and Pat.

And that's 30<sup>10</sup> in the Cook world of Sport.

But, not in the Brown world of Sport. Darby has been curling since 1981 in 4H curling. He curled with Norris, Matt and Oscar in March, 1988. Lost in semi-final. But his biggest thrill to date was skipping his school rink to the Stevens and Cook main event trophy. The icing (pardon the pun) on the cake was the fact it was the first school bonspiel in the new curling rink!

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<sup>10</sup> A phrase used by journalists to mark the end of a story. Two of many theories on its origin: 30 was used in telegram shorthand in the American Civil War era to mark the end of a telegraph. In stories written in longhand, X meant the end of a sentence, XX the end of a paragraph, and XXX the end of a story; in Roman numerals, XXX indicates 30.

## 4 FRIENDS

*...how was I to know that those innocent eight year olds would turn into sex maniacs by age ten?*

In the early years, Valerie's chums were Therese Upton, Penny Alexander and Lee Sutherland. With school consolidation Jean Fraser, Arlene Pospisil and Jennie Pierrepont were added. These three and Therese are still close friends today but Therese, the only one to go through school with Valerie, is perhaps the closest, possibly because they live near each other in Winnipeg.

Ginny and Doreen Tall became pals almost from the first day of school and were best friends and partners in crime through school and MTS at The Pas where they were roommates. They began their con game that first fall when they convinced me that Doreen was to come home with us after school. Since there was no one there to pick up Doreen, and her brother Barry was nowhere in sight, I brought her home but became doubtful and called Kay; it was all news to her. They didn't try that scam again but didn't need to, as they had a whole bag of tricks. Among their nutty antics was the creation of pillows stuffed with cattail fuzz for Kay and I. They were home alone and with every passing car that came down the road, they would douse the lights and jump into bed so Kay wouldn't see the wonderful

surprise...wonderful until the un-dried fuzz began to mold and rot.

One night, Ginny came home to find the front door locked, so she climbed the TV antennae armed with a baseball bat hoping to reach the window from the antennae and attract Valerie's attention. When that didn't work, she returned to 'Talls' car. They found an envelope and a match and she penned a note to the effect she was going to the 'Talls' and left it in the porch. Such a mundane act as banging on the door was beneath her.

Ronalie, too, got locked out, but she opted to drop in. She went to the basement window under our bedroom, removed the window and dropped onto the table below. I awoke to a scratching noise (window being removed) looked out the window and saw tracks in the snow. By that time Ronalie was coming up the stairs. I don't know who we think we are keeping out by latching the door!

One year, towards the end of June, when things were not too exciting at school, the four musketeers, Ginny, Doreen, Gayle Metcalfe and Cynthia Brischuk came out here to make dainties, having first informed me what ingredients I should purchase. They were all good, and well they should as the ingredients were definitely more exotic than I baked with.

Ronalie, like Ginny, found a bosom pal almost immediately on starting school. I am not sure that even at the tender age of six she didn't have an ulterior motive in a choice of a friend. When she was three we attended the festival in Swan where Ginny was reciting. Also reciting was a certain dishy young man of nine sitting a couple of rows behind us. Ronalie spent the entire evening gazing at and jabbering to him. He just happened to be the big brother of the girl Ronalie chose as a best friend. It took her another fifteen years but she finally got his undivided attention. However, I don't think she found it too much of a sacrifice being best friends with Renée. From 6 to 13, they were a real Mutt and Jeff combination. Ronalie was big for

her age and Renée was a shorty, but eventually they evened out somewhat. They had an advanced case of phonitis, and the only times the wires were cooled was when they were together. They were together as often as they could devise schemes as to why it was essential that one or the other stay overnight... most of which seemed to be spent in the bathroom. Through Ronalie and Renée, the Roberges and the Cooks became good friends so that Ronalie and Robin's eventual marriage was a real union of two families rather than thought of 'in-laws' which all too often has the connotation of a dirty word.

When Ronalie was seventeen or so her date took her out to dinner. When describing it afterwards she said, "It had one of those things over the table." Since Swan River restaurants aren't exactly the Ritz I was puzzled. "You mean a canopy?" I asked. Turned out it was a tablecloth. Doesn't that sound like something from the Beverly Hillbillies? Honestly, we have on occasion been known to use a tablecloth!

Valerie was in Grade XII when Nancy and Norris started school so it was a whole new ball game with no opportunity for a seventh inning stretch. Like the others, Nancy and Norris loved school as I expect most rural kids do, for the sociability if nothing else. With the ever increasing freedom kids are allowed, their friends were biking out at an earlier age than were the older girls friends and it was a sure sign when some small voice called, "Can I come out and play with Nancy and Norris?"

Nancy's friends were Cindy Hayman, Arlene Jeffrey, Deona Soura, Denise Yeo and Donna Mullin and with consolidation Carol Marchuk. Norris' pals were Owen Parsons, Cameron Smith, Trent Hinchcliff, and Bobby LeClaire. Through the years, Cindy, Carol, Owen and Cameron have endured. One hot summer day Bobby (Indian) and Denise (dark) were here playing in the paddling pool. Nancy spread her towel out and said she was going to

get a tan. Bobby asked, "What's a tan?" Nancy said, "Nice and dark like Denise." Bobby replied, "I like you the way you are."

The first year we rented our land to the Highmoors, Nancy, Norris and Owen went on a camping trek out in the windbreak with food and supplies. One of the Highmoors coming up to the machine shed caught them making a fire, the only time I know that they did such a thing, but the Highmoors must have wondered how safe their grain was on our land.

I thoroughly enjoyed making Hallowe'en costumes, making special goodies for school parties, helping with Valentine boxes etc. Some requests tested my ingenuity as they were made from whatever we had around. I don't have a complete record of costumes but Val won third prize for going as a box, Ginny got third for a tramp costume, and Ronalie got 2<sup>nd</sup> for an Indian costume. Some other costumes were:

Val: crepe paper dancer, cowboy

Ginny: crepe paper dancer, accident victim, witch, gypsy

Ronalie: Red Riding Hood, gypsy

Nancy: ghost, cat, Indian, hippie

Norris: ghost, clown, Spiderman, witch

If you can think of any other, it won't matter that it isn't here. I also remember that late October was prime time for illnesses so I am sure everyone missed one Hallowe'en or the other. For either a Hallowe'en or Valentine's party, I made fortune cookies for Norris and Ronalie and they were very popular. The cookies weren't great but the kids loved the fortunes. And if you think it is easy writing 25 or 30 fortunes try it sometime! I iced girls with white and boys with brown. I guess today, unisex fortunes would be permissible.

The year before Valerie started school Terry Helps took her to his Valentine's party. She was sure excited about

that. When Ronalie was four, Ginny took her to her Hallowe'en party. That is, I took her in at party time. This would be their first 'kids' party as they didn't have or go to birthday parties until they were in school.

### *Birthday Parties*

Birthday parties started in 1957 with Valerie's sixth and ended in 1973 with the twins' 11th. Birthday parties in my dictionary are occasions when crazy mothers allow their children to issue anywhere from seven to seventeen invitations to charter members of the squeal squad. All normal mothers are crazy – if not before, then after. All kids hate birthday cake but reduce it to rubble in a frenzied effort to find the nickels. I have a fair idea what the Gold Rush of '49 was like.

Preschool parties consisted of grandparents, sometimes an aunt that was around, and Judy and Glen Jeffrey. After their 10th and 11th birthdays, they were all limited to one or two friends with the option of staying overnight. For Valerie, Ginny and Ronalie's 12th birthdays Violet and Clarence took them to a movie, each with two friends and not necessarily on their birthday but closest date that they were here.

I've always maintained no matter how busy you are you should celebrate a birthday. Valerie arrived at harvest time and Ronalie at seeding and gardening time and I figured if I could take the time to have them, I could take the time to celebrate the occasion.

Any amateur who thinks of little girls parties in terms of frilly dresses and sedately playing with dolls had better alter their thinking before they become mothers. Little girls come in jeans, sneakers and t-shirts and are rough, tough, noisy and wild. At Nancy and Norris' 8th, one Cathy Clark happily and ably beat up on all the boys.

For birthday parties I always prayed for good weather as



the outdoor acoustics were more capable of absorbing the excessive din. If necessary I was quite willing to host a peanut scramble in 2 feet of snow. Scavenger hunts were always popular – if I dared I'd have sent them for a sand hill crane at the south end of Lake Winnipegosis but their parents expected them home at night.

There was a marked difference between town and rural parties. Rural parents picked up and returned the kids. Town hosts usually expected the parents to collect their own. Also rural parties usually lasted until 8 or 8:30 or until the hosts returned the kids on route to signing themselves into a rest home. Town invitations clearly stated 4-6:00. Meaning pick up your brat at 6.

I always insisted kids had to have an invitation or a phone call, no word of mouth invitations. This was to preclude the possibility that the kid was not invited but just wanted to go, or that the guest of honor had permission to invite five and wanted ten or the ultimate horror, it was all the kids' brainwave and the mother hadn't planned a party at all. Ultimately that did occur.

Nancy insisted Eva Giles was having a party, she had asked all nine girls by word of mouth. I said no so Nancy brought an invitation. Her mother was not even home and her father had to take the kids to the café for hot dogs, drinks, etc. I'll bet Eva got more than her birthday spankings that night!

I could always read the menu when Norris came home from a birthday party. If it wasn't on his t-shirt it was only because it never made it past his chin. When he finally came home reasonably clean I couldn't decide whether it was because they didn't get anything to eat, he was sick or he was finally becoming tidier.

Valerie told me recently that Therese still has an apron that I made for her birthday some 25 years ago, her Melanie now wears it. I did not remember but when researching my diary I found when I made it.

On Valerie's 25th birthday she was on route from Winnipeg to The Pas with Marilyn Friesen and Linda Bitten and I was issued orders to have her birthday supper ready. Always the obedient mother it was ready and waiting and waiting and waiting. They got here at seven, which wasn't really bad as another year we waited till 8:30 for her. For her 23rd, Jan Meadows and Yvonne Alex were here, then on to The Pas.

Valerie's first party guests included Lee and Merle Sutherland, Penny Alexander, Brenda Middleton, Danny and David, Glen Jeffrey.

**7th birthday** Lee, Merle, Patsy Tallifer, Penny, Therese, Valerie Sims, Judy Jeffrey, Maureen Gillespie.

**8th birthday** – eight girls, names not listed.

**9th** – Judy, Therese, Brenda, Lee.

**10th birthday** – Therese, Maureen, Penny, Lee, Valerie Sims, Brenda.

For Ginny's 22nd birthday all the family plus Rob, who was not yet family, went to The Pas to celebrate with her. We took goose to cook and her birthday cake. We also went up for her 21st.

Ginny's first party guests included Janice and Gail Metcalfe, Cynthia Brischuk, Therese, Doreen Tall, Penny, Brenda, Fern Hickman, Judy.

**8th birthday** – Maureen Yeo, Cynthia, Gail, Therese, Brenda, Fern, Merle.

**9th birthday** – Therese, Brenda, Gail, Cynthia, Doreen, Penny.

**10th birthday** – Doreen

**11th birthday** – Doreen and Ruby

The similarities in Valerie and Ginny's guest lists were because when there were sisters close to the same age, both were often invited. Thus the Sutherland and Metcalfe girls were both invited and Ginny was included at Penny's and Therese's.

Ronalie had a sixteenth birthday party - Cindy McClintock, Renée and Karen Coulter came from school with her. Lynn Wilson, Maryanne Myszczyzyn, Dale Sonnenberg, Jim Schukis, Leslie Johnson, Allen and Francis Luce came after supper. The girls had a pajama party in the bunkhouse which lasted till the following afternoon.

Ronalie's first party guests included Renée, Marion Yeo, Diane Younger, Brenda.

**8th birthday** – Diane, Renée, Cathy Sutherland, Debbie Hayman, and Bernice Woolford.

**9th birthday** – Renée, Marc, Art, Cathy and Doreen S.

**10th birthday** – Renée, Marc, Art, Diane and Joan Younger.

**11th birthday** – Cathy and Doreen, Renée and Andrea Babuik.

Of course Norris and Nancy's parties were always co-ed and that was ok until their 10th birthday. They had no party on their 9th as we were away and how was I to know that those innocent eight year olds would turn into sex maniacs by age 10? A drenching downpour ruled out outdoor activities and the only indoor activity that interested them was kissing. But what noisy kissing! Between the boy's vociferous attacks and the girl's delighted - but hardly delightful - squeals, Beatlemania paled by contrast. Finally we separated them and Ronalie stood guard at the bottom of the stairs - a brave girl who braved attack from both sides. I think I was brave too, to allow them an 11th party as well, but all went well. Maybe June 27, 1972 was full moon and all their wolfish instincts came to the fore.

Nancy and Norris' first party guests included: Larry McKay, Shannon Acorn, Cathy Graham, Deona Soura, Denise Yeo, Donna Mullin, Arlene Jeffrey, John Berresford, Bobby LeClaire, Terry LeDoux, Cameron Smith, Donald Hinchliffe, and Kelley Philipp.

**8th birthday** – John B, Deona S. Bobby, Brian Liles, Kelley Philipp, Denise, Terry, Donna, Trent Hinchcliffe, Kevin,

Owen, Kathy Clark plus Gwen and Gilbert, Liza, Ron, Marion and Archie Marshall, Gramp and Gran.

**9th birthday** – Returning from Val's grad and Iris' wedding.

**10th birthday** – Deona, Owen, Trent, Larry, Karen Anderson, Denise, Cameron, Bobby, Deona, Kathy and Kevin Silverthorn, Pat Coulter.

**11th birthday** – Bobby, Karen, Deona, Owen, Donna, Denise, Pat, Trent, Terry, Cameron, Carol Marchuk.

When Nancy and Norris were five we sent their names into CKOS Yorkton's Birthday Book. We were fascinated that also on the birthday book were five year old twins Gwen and Gilbert Marshall of Scrip, Saskatchewan. The following year we had a letter from their mother, Marion, with birthday cards for the kids. In July, Archie, their father, was up to Swan for the rodeo and came out to see us. In September Pat, the Smiths and the Sharleys stopped at their place on their way home from Elmer's funeral.

On the twin's 7th birthday with kids running wild all over the yard a car drove in and I wondered who it could be as all the kids were here. To our surprise and delight it was the Marshall twins with their Mom and Dad, Brother Ron and Sister Liza and two cakes.

We had a great visit, the kids joined in the party with happy abandon. Fortunately, it was a supper party so there was lots to eat but with four cakes I could always say like Marie Antoinette, "let them eat cake!" There were twelve kids, six Marshalls, seven Cooks, Mom and Dad and Danny.

We visited the Marshalls in 1971 when travelling in Saskatchewan and since then keep up to date on each other via Christmas letters and snapshots.

### *Anniversaries*

Our crew has always been known for noise when they are all together and NOISE when combined with their

exuberant cousins, Valerie, Ginny, Danny and David were the loudest combo. When we were celebrating Mom and Dad's 55th Anniversary, Shirley wrote that she and John were thinking about coming that weekend. I didn't tell her there would be a gang here as I knew she would not come.

Shirley grew up with a much older brother and she and John only had one son, Paul. Her worst fears were realized; the kids outdid themselves for pure unadulterated racket. They arrived at 3:30, kids were just leaving for Swan so Shirley asked Val to pick up some liquor for us that evening. They came home without it as enroute to the LC she (Val) got involved with a male – talking only! - thinking the store closed at eight. She got there at 6:15 to find out different. The older Cooks and Macks had a dry and early evening. Kids went to Swan early the next morning. Shirl, not one to give up easily, asked the same kids to pick up a box of maraschino cherries for Mom and Dad. They came home with a *bottle* of actual maraschino cherries – the ideal anniversary gift. Not only that, they also remembered the liquor which we didn't want then, as were having anniversary supper and evening.

Re: the maraschino cherries, Shirl asked Pat to see if there were any in Bowsman Co-op. There were, which probably convinced Shirl that this country wasn't as uncivilized as she thought. Unfortunately when opened the chocolates were so old and hard they were inedible. Fortunately, Shirl never knew that.

The Crossons came over; our five plus Kelly, Myrna and Darby were not exactly mute! I recall serving a chaotic lunch to a transient bunch. Shirley had brought some buns. Kelly roared from wherever he was, “can I have another one of those buns that taste like they were made out of swamp water?” thinking that I had made them. He mightily quickly got filled in on the true facts; Shirley proved she was vociferous too.

In 1975, we celebrated our 25th anniversary and the kids

told us that they had invited our brothers and sisters, etc. We knew they were having a supper for us. Ginny was here on holidays. Val came two nights before. The night before the party, Val was busy peeling and cooking potatoes and locked up at midnight. Very soon after she locked up, Del and Gordon arrived but could get no answer so Gordon came around to our window and called. So up we all got until 2:15. Everyone was very busy the next day and eventually they banished Pat and I. Later, they let us out and we had to walk towards the road but blindfolded. There, blindfolds were removed and we were allowed to walk back. All set up and ready for business was a gazebo. Around 25 people enjoyed the delicious barbequed chop supper the kids had prepared.

Later in the evening, cars began to arrive and we were honoured by about 75 well wishers and were presented with a beautiful engraved tray and cash from friends. The kids served another beautiful meal. Since the three older girls were away from home, a lot of the responsibility for invitations fell to thirteen year old Nancy and Norris. I particularly got a kick out of them telling how Norris phoned all of the meat distributors in the Valley for the best buy on chops. They all did a terrific job and since we didn't have a wedding – oh, yes we are married – it was really nice to be fêted after 25 years.

When our 30th anniversary approached, Ginny decided to have a supper for us and for the twins 18th birthday party. We had it a week early as we were all going to Janie and Don's 25th anniversary on the 29th. We had no knowledge of more than our own family going, but again there were about 25 there. Those sneaks had walked out with our coffee perk and whatever else they needed and we never noticed! After the 25th surprise we should have been suspicious, but no presentiments until after we finished eating. Harry Pierrepont drove in, and then we knew; another 25 people came and we had a lively evening. If in doubt, look up the

photo album and find Pat with a lamp on his head!

Again, thanks! 'Specially for the picnic table made by Rob.

Ten years later, we came to the conclusion those two were merely dress rehearsals for, as Ed Sullivan used to say, "The really BIG show" of 1985. This began with Nancy's arrival for a week's holiday. To explain her being at Ginny's so much, she told us they were going to celebrate our anniversary. On Thursday, Ronalie and the kids came on the bus; Valerie came at 6:45. Dale phoned for us to go over; we went and found Vic and Irma there. On Friday, Robin came. Dale phoned for us to come over again... this time we found Bert, Aileen, Lila and Bill there.

Even then it never occurred to us that they were here to celebrate our anniversary. At 5:45 am Saturday, we were awakened by the arrival of Norris, Russell and Tim who had really gone out of their way to be here for our anniversary, via The Pas! We were asked to Ginny's at eleven – there to find all the Cooks plus Tillie and Gordon. Later the Silverthorn side arrived, plus many locals; an afternoon of eat, drink and be merry. There was a program, special song - all taped. This lasted well into the night and continued the next day at our place, still lots to eat. This is all a very precious memory and again...

*Thanks Kids!*

## 5 GROWING UP ON THE FARM

*My solo and sole attempt at milking the cow ended with the cow switching her tail and catching it in my pin curls.*

A farm is a good place to raise kids because you can yell at them all you like without being accused of child abuse. Kids also get to see more of their dad. From age two, Pat would take the kids to town with him, to haul buttermilk or they'd be out around the yard when he was working, helping him 'fix' things. This was nice for me as I could work uninterrupted knowing they were accounted for. One cool spring night, Pat was talking to a neighbour up at the corner for ages and had Valerie with him. I thought she'd be getting cold but when I undressed her that night, I found I needn't worry, she had six pairs of panties on! There was another occasion when Pat took Ronalie to town with him and came home without her. Not as bad as it sounds: he had left her at his mom's while he went uptown.

On the farm, kids learn to do their share of work (however unwillingly), and have a clearer concept of what life is all about. For quite a few years, Pat and I did very little lawn mowing. The kids thought we should have a ride on and said, "Yeah, you'll likely get one when we leave home." Actually, we got one a couple of years



before the twins left. Valerie was the one most interested in cooking so Ginny and Ronalie got very little practice when she was around. Ginny was good at manual labor. Pat was impressed at her handling bales. Ronalie of course was willing to do anything pertaining to animals. One summer we were all out picking raspberries past the machine shed. Since Ginny was the most useless I sent her in to make us some lunch around 3:00 pm. No sign of lunch coming so when we finished picking at 5:45 pm, we started for the house. 'Lo and behold, we met Ginny bringing our lunch so we sat down by the machine shed and ate and then came in and made supper. Seems there was an Audie Murphy show on...

When Nancy and Norris were two and Valerie and Ginny were in Grade VII & VIII, we'd alternate bringing them home to baby sit while I hauled grain. It was during harvest one year, probably two or three years later, that Ginny wanted to make something that required cream so Ronalie volunteered to milk the cow. She got the milk alright but she took the potato pail to milk in and even the calf refused to partake of it. However, Ronalie milked thereafter, the only one who ever did, including her mother. My solo and sole attempt ended with the cow switching her tail and catching it in my pin curls.

When Valerie learned to drive she hauled grain in the evenings. For her seventeenth birthday, she had Arlene and Jennie for supper and spent the evening hauling grain. Until we quit farming, it was very important that she get home during harvest and haul at least a few loads. Ginny did not get as much opportunity as she left home the year after Valerie but did some too. Ronalie also did some but by that time the twins were a good size and it wasn't so important for me to be in the house. Nancy and Norris both did quite a bit of hauling. They all enjoyed it, as did I. To me it was an easy job, even though my work was still waiting for me.

One Sunday in summer when Ronalie was four, the McIntyres were visiting us. After supper Pat was milking the cow. Being a very hot day, Ronalie was just in panties and while out in the bales, stepped in a bee's nest. According to Neil, Pat cleared the fence in one leap to rescue Ronalie but she had 23 stings. Neil had one, Pat had none. Poor Ronalie sobbed all night. Later that summer when Mom, Dad, the three girls and I were picking saskatoons on the home quarter, Ginny stepped on an old log and stirred up a hornet's nest. She was stung many times but I applied damp earth and she was not too uncomfortable. When Valerie was quite small she came in one day and said, "A fly bit me." It was a bee sting but she was more indignant than hurting.

When Ronalie was nine she was helping bale and at the corral was on top of a good load when she toppled off the load to the ground. She was pretty winded and sore, but no serious injuries. Pat said he was pretty scared to go around the load to see her. One year, Pat had Ronalie driving the "M" (that's his tractor that's been around for about forty years and he once said he'd get rid of me before he'd let it go)<sup>11</sup> and it was such a fascinating experience that the next afternoon when Pat was combining at Pohl's and I was away, she decided to take it out for a spin. When she decided to turn around she cramped the wheels too much and couldn't move. She had boards and a shovel out there thinking she was stuck and attempting to get out of her predicament. She never said a word about it to me; it was dark when I went for Pat at Pohl's and the next morning she confessed and Pat went out and got it. And I, Ronalie, *never* heard the end of it!

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<sup>11</sup> The old 'M' was sold at auction in '97 and Ginny and Oscar bought it. Dad paid approximately \$1200 for it in 1942 and Ginny and Oscar paid over \$1100 for it at the auction.

Valerie hated mice. One night when we had overnight guests, Valerie came down to the bathroom and woke us up shouting, "Get out of here you stupid thing!!" Our guests thought Valerie and Ginny were having a fight but it was Valerie on top of the toilet battling a three inch mouse. When she saw it escape into our bedroom she slammed our door shut and raced upstairs.

### *Health*

When Valerie was between one and two, Neil was visiting us and had his possessions in a box on the floor in the bedroom. Valerie got into it and ate some aspirins. We had no idea how many so we took her to the hospital and had her stomach pumped out. Dr Cameron considered there weren't more than 2 or 3.

Since in preschool days kids were not much in contact with communicable diseases, once Valerie started school we were knee deep in them. She wasn't in school two weeks before she brought the flu home and it took about 10 days to contaminate us all. We had a month's respite before the red measles arrived. Valerie did not get back to school for three weeks and in that time Ronalie and Ginny got them also. The following year, 1958, began the ball rolling with pink eye in Sept, as if our eyes weren't gritty and itchy enough from grain dust. We all got it. November was a disaster, starting on the first when Valerie came home with mumps. She was not entirely to blame for chicken pox which began with Ginny on her sixth birthday but Valerie was a close second, broke out on the following day. By the 19th when they were feeling pretty spry Ronalie broke out in chicken pox and next day Pat came down with the mumps. It was the 2nd of December before Pat resumed chores. Ginny rounded out 6 weeks of illness by cold and fever. This was a bad year for her: constant colds, high fever, pneumonia which

culminated in removal of her tonsils the following June. Anyhow, it was Dec 12th before I got my winter boots out of storage.

There was one illness I will never forget. Ronalie was quite small and all three were really miserable. I had been up most of the previous night; had done a huge wash; it was a damp, chilly day so had to dry everything indoors on clothes horse. Mountains of wet clothes, unhappy kids and in walks a very gabby Wear-Ever<sup>12</sup> lady. I thought she was 'ever'. She stayed afternoon, supper and until 11 pm. I bought a fruit press from her, it has been very useful and I have always been glad I bought it, but every time I use the darn thing I am reminded of that dreadful day and that pain in the neck lady.

Nancy and Norris made the rounds after they started school but by then there was a vaccine for red measles which is the most miserable of the communicable diseases. They had German measles which I believe the others did too.

But chicken pox was the worst and bad timing. Norris developed them just before we were to go to Winnipeg for Valerie's graduation and Iris' wedding. We took him anyhow, he went to exercises and to wedding but stayed with Shirl and John during grad banquet and dance and rehearsal party. Nancy developed them in the middle of swimming lessons.

Nancy and Norris had periodic bouts of bronchitis until they were two. I had a few sleepless nights with Norris, Penicillin needles were standard treatment then and I am sure there was good reason for halting their use but I really blessed them at the time as in 24 hours the kids were on the mend. Norris was plagued with earaches, fever and colds, a result of bad tonsils but he outgrew it.

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<sup>12</sup> A brand of pots and pans in the fifties and sixties

Nancy had the mumps in 1969; Norris with pink eye in '74.

All the kids reacted differently to illness. Valerie looked really ill when her temperature reached 99.5; she was pettish and wanted attention. Ginny had to have a fever of over 104 before she would agree to lie down. If Ronalie had anything wrong she simply withdrew from the human race and resurfaced again when she felt better. Nancy hated being sick especially whooping it up. She would say, "I don't want to be sick" (well who does, kid?) or, "Hold my hand." Norris, for the same complaint wasted no time. If he felt ill he lay down by the toilet with a blanket and slept till he had to whoop, back to sleep again. With fever, Nancy was like Val, Norris like Ronalie.

### *Pop Culture*

Our first introduction to TV was in Saskatoon in 1955, at that time being piped "dead" from Winnipeg so all events were a week late. I can't remember the kids being fascinated, probably because they found their 'live' cousins more interesting. Ronalie's first view was at Janie and Don's when she and I visited in March 1960. She walked into the living room, pulled up a footstool about 2 feet from the TV. and was hooked. We got a TV (April 27, 1960) before we got service (June 24, 1960) and could pick up a weak signal from Yorkton. We watched Princess Margaret's wedding, Riverboat and Gunsmoke through a blizzard. Judy and Glen would come over and the five kids would line up on chairs to peer at fuzzy figures with great absorption. Twenty five years later at our 35th anniversary, Glen reminisced about how he and their hired man had come to watch wrestling.

On June 25th we got Yorkton over Baldy Mountain and thus began the great addiction. The girls and I would bring dishpan and drain to dining room table so we

wouldn't miss a minute. Bedtime became a hassle and that Christmas Valerie and Ginny dropped from 1st to 5th in their classes. Ronalie, not going to school yet stayed up later than them and knew every program for every hour of the week. Fortunately they learned to pick their favorites and their addiction lessened. Valerie's grand passion was (and is!) hockey, in particular Detroit Red Wings and in particular Gordie Howe; eventually in this 20 year love affair Pat referred to him as "Old Whiskers" when Valerie was around. Even this past year she cut short a long distance call because he was on TV. However, she loves hockey in any shape or form and chewed her way through a box of toothpicks during the first Canada-Russia series; doing so on our chesterfield leaping around in her excitement.

Ginny liked strange shows like Paradise Island and The Man from U.N.C.L.E. She was the worst for prolonging homework until the TV was shut off; this was particularly annoying when she was taking typing in Grade 10 and after everyone was bedded down we were lulled to sleep by the clack clack of typewriter keys – if we were lucky to sleep.

Ronalie, younger in TV's heyday had favorites like Diver Dan and Popeye. Once when a scary show was on she ran to the kitchen, leaped up on the counter, then nearly fell off trying to peek around the corner to see what was happening.

Nancy and Norris grew up with TV so were more inclined to take it or leave it but they would sit side by side, eyes unblinking absorbed in their favorites and I have pictures to prove it. Later, every week when Don Messer came on Nancy would go and change into a dress and "Her dancing shoes" and join in with the Islanders. When Gunsmoke came on with James Arness standing alone on a deserted street outside the Long Branch, Norris raced for his six-shooter and outdrew Matt Dillon. Recently

Norris divulged to me his terror of TV violence: Gumby and Pokey, when they were in a flour factory and in danger of being smothered by flour. He probably watched cops and robbers, and cowboys and Indians without a trace of fear.

Valerie and Ginny were avid Bobby Curtola fans. Valerie corresponded with a girl from Ontario who had a Bobby fan club and they were fortunate he visited Swan River in his heyday so they saw him in person. Other than that they were both very much into popular music. I can recall many times with TV blaring in the living room Ginny standing on a chair (radio was above the fridge) listening to a favorite band or vocalist. Today Valerie goes for Neil Diamond and Kenny Rogers, who are my favorites. Ronalie at one time was ga-ga over the Monkees – they were cute and I liquid embroidered<sup>13</sup> a blouse for her with their pictures and names. She liked everyone and at one point one wall of her room was literally covered with current favorites. Just check out the pin and tack holes on west wall of south bedroom!

All held their breath when the Top 10 came on and one New Year's eve when the Roberges and Ronalie's boyfriend were here for supper, the girls (Ronalie and Renée) spent the entire night listening to the Top 100 for the year. I gather the boyfriend did not share this enthusiasm, his comment in our guest book was "Damn the Top 100s."

Norris, in his turn, was into rock and I found it most unbearable of all, also loudest. Nancy was not that enthusiastic about music per se but loved to dance.

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<sup>13</sup> A paint tube that was a craft for adult women

*Extra Curricula's*

Valerie had a mania for collecting stones. For the most part I could not detect anything spectacular about them but for several years endured a big dishpan full of them in the basement and finally threw them out. There was absolutely nothing spectacular about one of Ginny's collections – lint out of the dryer. With a family of seven it accumulated quickly and I endured for a time and then threw it out as was afraid of moth larvae breeding in it. She also collected something or anything from every cross country competition she attended – a leaf from Bird's Hill, a serviette from Tween Lakes Motel, a placemat from Roblin, etc – and from everywhere – even the hospital – the little packages of salt, sugar, vinegar and catsup.

I must also mention Val's collection of Hockey News and sports pages from the daily papers. I am inclined to believe that her ambition was to wallpaper the arenas of the Red Wings, Houston Aeros and Whalers: the three rinks that “Old Whiskers” called home in his long and illustrious career.

Our kids were all Junior Gardeners and each won a prize for their gardens at least once. They had no qualms about having gardens and planted the seeds with enthusiasm, but it took considerable nagging to keep them weeded. When Norris was five, the older girls had gardens. He was too young but he wanted a garden, so I let him have three rows which he filled with a potpourri of leftover seeds. It grew thick and lush and was an interesting display. When the judges came they were both amused and impressed and later when writing up the winners for the paper included a paragraph on Norris and his green thumb.

All the kids exhibited at the Legion Hall show and one thing they all won on was Phyllis Pierrepont Special, a collection of vegetables. Valerie and Ginny always did



well on snaps and all won on baking. Once I didn't have a junior prize list, but I thought bran muffins was on it, so Nancy made them. We then discovered there were no muffins in juniors, so I said to put them in adult class. She did, and won first prize! When Norris and Russell, (more interested in the money angle at ages 13 and 15) went all out, they borrowed from each garden. Unbeknownst to me, they both picked my Missouri currants and beat me. I was furious with them not so much the placing, but I was treasurer and director of horticultural society and three exhibits from one yard was dirty pool. Another year, Nancy was furious because her yellow pepper won first prize but under Norris' name. I wasn't aware that peppers had such definite personalities but she was very certain.

When Ronalie was nine, the older girls were grabbing all the best exhibits and she couldn't find anything. She found a marrow- from where I didn't know- as I never grew them. Anyhow, she won on it.

Now the grandchildren are into it. Darby has been growing a garden for six years and won prizes on it twice and winning on exhibits each year, starting when he was six. Tanis has entered each year that she has been here, starting when she was six (three times) and won prizes each time. Aaron won on cukes when he was five. Heidi grew her first garden this year (1985), and won 2nd prize; with exhibits she won \$13.75.

My wish for all of you is: may all of your children be junior gardeners so you can have the pleasure of nagging, digging, judging, and take 125 trips to the garden the third Wednesday in August come rain or shine. Then truck the displays to town, next day collect them and try to decide what to do with half a garden of displays and castoffs.

Despite Valerie's allegations about a deprived childhood (mostly because all the rest joined 4H) she did okay. She and Ginny attended Explorers for three years. I

can't remember what it was all about but in hindsight I'd say the best organization anyone attended from a mother's point of view by virtue of no involvement. They attended Sunday school regularly for five years. Later they attended Youth Group, an organization for teenagers, Their main accomplishment was making and selling little biffies as souvenirs of Bowsman's famous biffie burning in 1967. For fund raisers they put on pancake suppers, stew suppers etc and enjoyed hay rides, dances, wiener roasts, and even a trip to Thompson one Easter.

The year the twins were born Valerie and Ginny wanted to go to camp but it was impossible as only a week after they were born. But they went to church camp at Madge Lake the next year. This was Pentecostal camp – no shorts, slacks for some things, so the Sunday before they left I spent the day getting a week's supply of starched ruffled dresses ready. They had a wonderful time and did Bible School correspondence lessons for years afterwards.

During Christmas holidays when Valerie was in high school, she and Midge Ashcroft attended a mental retardation conference in Winnipeg. Later she had to go to Swan to work on the presentation with Marilyn Corbett so I took her down and spent an evening with Alice Riddell. During which time we indulged in a couple of glasses of sherry. I drove home with extreme caution!

Valerie is the only member of the family to reach status of TV personality. She and three other students appeared on CKOS Yorkton's "High Time" - a panel discussion on topics relevant to students. Thelma Beals and two others were also on it. Not just a one shot deal either, they were on 2 weeks!

Valerie had the opportunity of attending Pool camp at Wannacumbac at Clear Lake and reported a super time. I was upset because everyone in the country received a post

card from her except Ma and Pa. When she was packing to come home she found our postcard had fallen behind the bunk.

Ronalie attended 4H camp, of course Renée went too, so the Roberges took them down and Pat went for them, Pat swears Wellman Lake rose two feet when they broke camp! I know Ronalie came home and crashed for the afternoon. Another year she went to 4H camp counselor seminar and later in the summer went back as counselor. She really enjoyed that, a very prestigious position and she was really tickled that a couple of Bowman girls with rather high opinions of themselves were most respectful to her.

Ronalie also attended Youth Group when she reached that age. There were school parties and dances. When Valerie and Ginny were in Grade VIII and VII parties were parties with games. When Ronalie reached Grade VIII three years later, parties were out and dances were in. Four years later when Nancy and Norris were in Grade VI, dances were the order of the day and Darby was into sock hops in Grade IV.

When Valerie and Ginny were in Grades VII and VI they were furious with me when they returned from the Festival. They were the only ones in knee highs, all the rest wore nylons. I told a friend and she asked, "how did they hold them up?" Adults wore girdles, and I guess it was beyond her to visualize 12 year old girls wearing girdles.

All five attended summer Bible School under the guidance of Miss Roach and Miss Davey. As a teenager in Winnipeg in the 1940's, I had attended Bible study at Miss Roach's home and was very surprised to learn that they were conducting Bible school and camp 20 years later and 325 miles from home. Miss Roach was killed in a car accident at an intersection not far from her home.

When Valerie and Ginny were small we would take them down to the river where we would allow them in about 18 inches of water and watch them like hawks. Both of us being non swimmers we were not about to let a situation develop that we couldn't handle. When Red Cross offered swimming lessons at the "dam" just north of us, we made sure the kids learned. Whether they were crazy about it or not they went willingly since lessons coincided with raspberry season. All became adequate swimmers but I believe Ronalie was most enthusiastic, and still is. When Ronalie first started lessons they had an adult class so Pat joined it and promptly proved that "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." One night he walked into a hole and couldn't get out. He pushed himself upward but all that surfaced was a hand. Fortunately Gordon Mullin saw it and realized someone was in trouble and hauled him out.

When Nancy and Norris were able to swim a little Pat took them down one night. I was surprised when they returned a half hour later until I saw that Pat was fully clothed and soaking wet. Seems Nancy went over to where the water was deep. Pat realized this but rather than tell her lest she panic, he hoped she would swim to shallower water. However she didn't so he went in and with Norris formed a chain to shallow water and pulled her over. So three rather shaken individuals headed for home.

Norris went on several camping weekends with 4H conservation under the supervision of Murray and Vena, usually Steep Rock Lake.

The older kids didn't have much chance to work out because they were needed at home. Valerie, Ginny and Ronalie babysat, mostly for Val and Glen, but others as well. Nancy babysat for them too, and I believe on one occasion, Norris did. I am sure Val will never forget the

time she was babysitting for a big family celebration. She was tending two different sets of kids and one never paid her.

Ginny and Doreen were caretakers of the Christian Education building<sup>14</sup> for a time and Ginny had her wages encased in her photo album; she could always hang onto money.

When Bowsman was planning its Centennial in 1967 they invited citizens to submit ideas for a manner of commemorating the occasion. Ginny and Doreen planned a giant three tier graduated wooden birthday cake. Their idea was chosen and the prize was \$10. The edges were filled with dirt and flowers were planted. It stands at the entrance to Bowsman and when cared for still looks very attractive but unfortunately is usually weed filled except for a special occasion like Homecoming.

When Ronalie graduated (1974) Valerie and Ginny 'chaperoned' her gang on an overnight campout at Regatta Bay. Some canoed across and some back packed a half mile around but I am sure they felt it worth the effort to reach a secluded spot where they could raise their own particular brand of hell. The elite consisted of Ronalie, Renée, Les Johnson, Kevin Hayman, George Coupland, Verneece Hogg, Karen Coulter, Cathy Connolly, Mary Anne Luce, Brian Wilson and Beth Price.

Ronalie worked for S.T.E.P. the year she finished Grade XII. This was the Student Temporary Employment Program and they worked as teams. They worked for farmers and some of their jobs included painting, fencing, tearing down old buildings and repairs.

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<sup>14</sup> Currently the United Church. Great Grandpa Thomas Cosford built it.

## 6 I REMEMBER...

-Valerie proudly showing me how she had cut her new doll's "fingernails."

-Her remark on seeing the sunset: "sunshine fall down."

-Ginny's favorite story, "The Five Brolly Jothers" and her "snow snoot".

-Her alibi for messing up a cake I'd iced for the fair, "I didn't do it, my hand fell down."

-How I loathed *The Old Woman and Her Pig* after reading it to Ronalie for the 854th time.

-Ronalie's heart break when the calf she had played with in the barn was let out and ran wild. Ronalie sobbed, "Betty doesn't know me." However, after spending a day in the pasture with her, Betty followed Ronalie to the fence.

-When Pat and I were putting rods in the granary and Valerie and Ginny had strict orders to play nicely outside. We could hear them laughing, obviously having a great time. When we came out we discovered they'd been having a dirt fight... we certainly didn't have to be told!

-Nancy and Norris' first fight: sitting on living room floor, pulling a gold plastic elephant out of a crackerjack and screaming like banshees.

-Having to check the backseat occasionally to see if

Nancy was still with us as she was so quiet. Not so Norris. He was standing between us firing questions in Pat's right ear and my left ear.

-The year we went through chicken pox and mumps I never got my winter boots out for six weeks after the snow came.

-Norris at four, asking me, "Can you die from emphysema?" I had to ask, "what's that?" and he told me!

-The night we left Valerie's pet blanket at Mom's and forfeited a couple of hours sleep for our carelessness.

-Ronnie riding tricycle around the Co-op store so much that Pat bought it for her. It would have been second hand for anyone else.

-Hauling grain with two kids (N&N) and four kittens.

-Ginny and Barb running around the dining room table for half an hour nonstop, singing "Santa Claus is Coming to Town."

-Same two taking Gravol to offset carsickness on the winding roads to Beaver Lake and spent the entire time there sleeping it off.

-Valerie forever unlacing her shoes and then lacing them up in her own inimitable style.

-Ginny forever tying strings to drawers and doors so the kitchen became an obstacle course.

-I learned to call the dog instead of Ronnie, wherever he came from, there she was.

-The train of toys and bread pans Nancy and Norris made thru the living, dining room and kitchen.

-Sending Valerie in to put beets on to cook when I was working in the garden, unfortunately I neglected to mention adding water.

-Again when gardening, hearing Ronnie over by the cows' trough wailing (I thought) "The calf bit me." I hurried over and she was trying to bath a cat in the trough. Poor puss was desperately 'cat paddling' around, a vision of terror.

-Ginny put to bed for her afternoon nap and we could hear her muttering, “stupid, shut up, stupid, shut up.” (Both words were verboten). When I scolded her for it she said, “I was saying stupnickel.” (Pat’s non-verboten word).

-Norris, when he was well into his teens confessing that when he was little he used to drop his silverware on the floor and when he bent to pick it up, shoved his unloved liver down the register.

-Nancy, playing ‘Hearts’ when very young, came out with an ace and took the trick. When we asked her why, she said rather plaintively, “I just wanted to take a trick.”

-Ginny, at three, sitting at table between Pat and I and nonchalantly remarking, “You know I hate that damn pepper.”

-Valerie emptying a bottle of ‘Evening In Paris’ in her crib. We had evenings of Paris for months after.

-When Ronalie played nursemaid to a bird, she had it in a box but with improved health it soon got out, and I, seven months pregnant with twins, trying to catch it as it nimbly hopped about on the floor and I didn’t! But I got it.

Nancy running out with a measuring cup when I was cutting hedge and asking, “What does one-line-four mean?” She had to be making butterballs or unbaked cookies.

-Norris, when Mom and Dad and Crooks were visiting and he was getting tired, asking, “When are you going home?”

-Last week when Nancy was home and voiced objection that Russell had not yet been mentioned. I told her there wasn’t much to tell until he was 14-15 and he and Norris started playing chess. Except – I babysat him once when 3-4 and when his mother came for him, he kicked and screamed and fought. Next time Glen and Dennis Long came for him.



-The spring Ronalie was four I was working in the garden and she cut Towser's hair and Bryl<sup>15</sup> creamed him. Another day she plugged in the hot water heater in the back porch and burned a hole in the linoleum.

-Once when we had company everyone dressed up but Ginny had jeans on. One of them said, "I bet she hasn't anything else." Ginny never answered, went to her room, took all of her clothes out of the closet and marched out, loaded down.

-On one of our very infrequent appearances at church, when we picked up the hymnals to sing Ronalie, 3 ½, Ronalie, loud and indignant, said, "Where's my book?"

-Valerie hanging a much loved corduroy jacket on the pig pasture fence when we were digging spuds. When she went out after dinner the pigs had also had dinner - they liked the jacket too.

-Sending Ginny downstairs for a jar of saskatoons and rhubarb. She was puffing and huffing all the way up and when she got here, had a jar of saskatoons and a jar of rhubarb.

-Searching high and low for a tin of cooked chicken to no avail. Finally Ronalie confessed she'd eaten it as a between meal snack. That was one whole chicken.

-Nancy and Norris were too liberal with bathroom deodorizers when they around four or five . So I moved it to the kitchen cabinet, Nancy came out and said, "Ok Mom, you're just going to have to move the toilet to the kitchen."

-Valerie and Ginny giving Ronalie a hard time when they were around 8 and 9 and she was five. I told them someday she would be as big as they and she'd get her revenge. "Someday" came, and she was bigger.

-Shortly after Nancy and Norris started school we

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<sup>15</sup> *Brylcreem* was a brand of styling products for men, started in 1928.

heard that Owen had cut his eyelashes. Vena asked what possessed him to do that. He said, "Nancy does." Her eyelashes were very fair and to Owen, being dark, it appeared she hadn't any.

-When we got plumbing installed, it was evening when they finished all except the septic tank switch. We didn't expect to use it until that was done. Then Mr. Bates said to Ronalie, (Val and Ginny being school age were already in bed) "How would you like to have a bath?" She liked, and up and at it again the next morning.

-Doris called Valerie a 'baby bulldozer' at Hazel and Ernie's reception, as, with both elbows extended, she ploughed through the crowd.

-Coming home from Grampa's the Christmas after Valerie was two. We'd been there, and at Cooks most of the day. Valerie grabbed the broom from a cleaning set we'd given her that morning and cried, "sweep, sweep, sweep," as I struggled to get her ready for bed.

-Earl Yeo asked Ginny what happened when she got six 100's and a 98% in Grade 2. She said, "I guess I made a mistake."

-The first time we left Valerie and Ginny in charge of the other three. It was just after Gramma Cook died (1964) and we went to visit Violet and Hazel. So Val, that shoots down your claim to child slavery - you were not baby sitting at three.

-During school bonspiel phoning the rink and no one knew where Ginny was, no one had seen her all afternoon. Finally learned she'd lost out and was down at the skating rink playing hockey with Jim and Ken Pospisil.

-My kids infuriated me by asking, whenever I insisted on house being cleaned up, "who's coming?" or if I cleaned myself up, "Where are you going?" Admittedly if either of those things were coming to pass, I did do that, but it certainly wasn't the only time. No doubt they felt it wasn't warranted otherwise.



## APPENDIX

*The following is another one of Jackie's writings.*

Monica, when you have shaken the dust and snowflakes of Canada from your heels and returned to your beloved Australia, I want you to remember -

1. Canada grows better pumpkins than Australia does!
2. Curling, particularly with Nancy, Ginny and I when we made it to the first event final. No comment on that game!
3. The gallons of coffee we drank together.
4. The invigorating winters.
5. How your 'rabbit' automatically turned into our place whenever I made bread.
6. How good Australia looks from half a world away.
7. The arguments with Pat, usually split decisions.
8. Killing poultry till 2 a.m. And going to work at 6 a.m.
9. All the wild meat, minus bear, that you enjoyed – sometimes.
10. Hunting fever, hunting talk. Results: zilch – usually.
11. The neighbours who lived a half mile away.

I will remember -

1. The Aussie lass who, when my last daughter left the nest, promised to take her place and who I sometimes see more often.
2. The gallons of coffee we drank together.
3. The fabulous dinner parties you hosted.
4. The time I gathered eggs for you and had to climb over 6 ft of snow from the road.
5. The sample of goodies.
6. The numerous beautifully decorated cakes on all family occasions, especially Nancy's wedding and Dad's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday.
7. How great Canada looks when I'm right here.
8. Messenger service between Bowsman and Swan, Brandon and Flin Flon.
9. The crosswords you collected or bought for me.
10. The only Australian I ever knew.

## DESCENDANTS

*(At the time of publishing)*

### Grandsons

Darby Brown (1973), Aaron Roberge (1979), Dieter Honke (1982), Mitchell Jeffrey (1986), Nathan Honke (1987), Patrick Cook (1997), Blaine Jeffrey (1999), Jeremie Cook (2000), Jonah Cook (2003)

### Granddaughters

Tracy Mahon (née Honke) (1971), Tanis Pittet (née Roberge) (1976), Heidi Gelo (née Honke) (1979), Alina Roberge (1982), Tessa Roberge (1986), Libby Jeffrey (1988), Paula Jeffrey (1993)

### Great Grandsons

Liam Mahon (1996), Kayle Pittet (1997), Aiden Pittet (2001), Draven Roberge (2003)

### Great Granddaughters

Jennifer Bialek (1993), Meghan Mahon (1993), Sarah Mahon (1995), Nicole Besnard (1996), Danielle Besnard (1999), Rhiannon Pittet (2003), Mia Brown (2003), Natalee Ironstand (2007), Madison (Maddi) Thomson (2008), Nori Brown (2011)

## TO THE EDITOR...

As we all know, this collection of bound words are a testament to Lela Jacqueline Cook and her love of her family. Never taking away from her chronicling we need to herald her granddaughter, Libby Jeffrey, who has taken up Jackie's love of the family history and the need to record it. Although it may be trivial to most of the world, it is so precious to the Cooks and our future generations. Libby has taken all of "Gramma's" collected works (which were originally typed by Ronalie), and edited, organized and detailed it for print.

We of this generation agree that Libby has "mad" organizational skills as who else could keep their Aunts and Uncle on course and on time with information flow and deadlines!

Thanks Libby!

Love All the Descendants of Pat and Jackie Cook

# YOUR MEMORIES...







